

Houston Graduate School of Theology

**Implementing Change toward a Missional Model within Two
African Methodist Episcopal Churches in Downtown
Houston and Rural San Jacinto County**

A Project Report Submitted to the Faculty
For the Degree of Doctor Ministry

By

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**Implementing Change toward a Missional Model within Two
African Methodist Episcopal Churches in Downtown
Houston and Rural San Jacinto County**

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A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Leonard Lee". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

Leonard Charles Lee

Dedication

This work is dedicated to some folks who have no idea of their impact on my ministry. My God-father in the ministry, Rev. Dr. Leo Griffin, whose confidence in me has never been in question. I thank him and Evangelist Griffin for taking me as not only a minister in the Gospel but as a friend and colleague. I also wish to thank Jeff and Roz Baldwin for their unflinching support. I not only consider them friends but family. I also would be so unthoughtful if I did not lift up the congregations of Mt. Pilgrim, Brown Chapel, and Wesley as being my guinea pigs or test subjects doing this project.

Volunteering for training sessions and exercises was crucial to the success of this project.

Last, let me thank my family for continuing to ask, when are you going to finish; and for their pushing me on. And of course, let me thank Meshondria Choice-Lee, my wife and partner in ministry and life. No one patiently prodded me on more than you. You knew when to ask, when are you going to finish, and you knew when to say take your time. I thank God for your show of support and love.

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Abstract

This project addresses what it takes to transition a church from a traditional to a missional model. It compares churches that have made the transition with those that have attempted and not succeeded. The project involves utilizing congregations that need different approaches to ministry because their churches are not growing and, in some cases, dying due to lack of relationship with surrounding communities. These churches are faced with the dilemma of relocating or changing their ministries. This project offers the option to transition to a missional focus, through interaction with the community, instead of expecting the community to interact with the church.

Chapter I

Introduction

The pastor of a church is normally always looking to improve the ministry of the church through engaging and uplifting the congregation toward kingdom-building. Pastors should have their eyes open for problems the church may be experiencing and how that impediment may be impacting the spiritual health of the members. Since the church is constantly evolving due to the ever-changing membership, so the concerns of the church are also ever-changing. Every addition or deletion, life-changing event, and adjustment due to the natural aging or maturing of members cause changes in the church. The book, *Studying Congregations*, describes it like this: “No student (study) of a congregation can ever presume to have captured its essence. The essence is constantly changing and the wise student (pastor), will find ways to work alongside those they are studying, offering feedback and direction with humility, in the complex reality of an ever-changing congregation.”¹

While observing these congregations, the thought occurred that they might be ready to engage in a ministry of transition since the churches and the communities around these churches are constantly in transition. Two congregations were selected for the focus of this project—one rural and one urban. Both congregations are part of a denominational ministry that pursues a traditional form of worship—traditional in the sense that they

1. Nancy T. Ammerman , et al., *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 10.

primarily practice a ministry that measures church growth instead of kingdom growth.

One of the success benchmarks for these traditional church models is not how many members have come into the kingdom but how many members have come into the church. As a result, the idea developed to prepare these churches to move from a traditional model of ministry to a missional model of ministry.

The desire and passion for this project, to prepare churches for missional ministry derived from the personal belief that missional ministry is inherently core to the church in general and the African Methodist Episcopal church (AME) in particular. The vision statement of the AME church asserts, “At every level of the connection and in every local church, the AME church . . . shall seek out and save the lost and to serve the needy.”² The AME denomination is the oldest, Black denomination in the United States, founded in 1781 by former slaves, free men of color. The denomination experienced significant growth in its first two hundred years for two attractive reasons.

One, it was founded by free men of color, who were no longer burdened with preaching the way their masters had directed them to preach. They were now able to preach a gospel of liberation and not one of subordination. “The AME church may well feel proud of the fact that it was the first clear, active voice and demonstration that was heard in the Western world against discrimination and segregation based on color.”³ Because of that independence, the church became a powerful voice not only for freedom in worship but for emancipation in general. Important U.S. historical figures, Frederick

2. Roderick Belin, *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church* (Nashville: The AMEC Publishing Union, 2016), 23.

3. Howard Gregg, *History of the A.M.E. Church* (Nashville: The AMEC Publishing Union, 1980), 12.

Douglas and Harriet Tubman, were members of the AME church. Additionally, this church was independent, and for the first time, the members saw Black leadership in the pulpit as well as in all other areas of the church.

In addition, the church had something else going for it, which was being community-focused, a characteristic of missional ministry. These churches operated within the neighborhoods where the congregants lived. They were involved in those communities to the point that even folks who were not church members came to the church for assistance. The church was growing godly relationships and not just church members. Therefore, the church had tremendous success in its first two hundred years of existence; however, in more recent years, the church has experienced declining membership due, in large part, to the decline of inner cities and the move of middle-income African Americans seeking the convenience of the suburbs.

Like most urban churches, the AME churches have suffered from out-growing their neighborhoods. Their traditional model of ministry was one of drawing on the community for growth—the congregants walked to church and churches were community-oriented. As congregants moved to the suburbs, however, their children did not follow their parents back into the city for worship. The children began to drift toward suburban churches and their comfort and convenience; therefore, a significant number of small urban churches moved into decline. What has now become necessary is for these churches to reconnect with the communities in which they are located. They are now trying to grow by being community inclusive, but since they have been neglecting the surrounding communities for years, their strategies of how they connect with prospective members need to change. Therefore, the thinking is that these congregations are good

prospects for this missionally focused project, which also means getting back to their roots. Missional ministry opens a possible pathway for rejuvenating one of the core attributes of the AME church, which is community focus.

Project Outcomes

This project was created with five desired outcomes. The first outcome was participation. The desire was to see core church leaders involved in the project who could make an impact on the direction of the ministry. The thought was that, if the core leaders were involved, then the long-term impact of the project would be sustained. Along with core leader involvement, the project would also measure the participants who would start the project and those who would complete the project. Starting and completion may be indicators of whether the project stimulated interest.

The second outcome was congregational impact, which is functionally defined as how the congregation responds to missional ministry. The goal was that at least one-third of the congregation would pursue missional ministry. The thought was that, while core leaders may participate in the project, success would occur if there was enough interest for the congregation to become actively involved. The idea was that this project could help some congregants become aware that a churchgoer is not the same as being a disciple of Jesus. Both congregations have members who have always been churchgoers but not active participants in the work of the church. They attend and pay their tithes, but they lack a fire within them to do ministry work. The message never gets to them because they believe they are already saved and, therefore, no additional ministry work is necessary. They have sometimes been called the “frozen chosen.” Helping them realize that church growth and kingdom growth are not the same and getting them motivated

toward kingdom growth was a primary objective. A third of the congregation being involved was the goal, which represents five to ten participants from the rural church and ten to fifteen participants from the urban church.

Third is the outcome of community impact. Both churches have little community involvement; therefore, almost any community relationship could be significant. The rural church had no community involvement, and the urban church had a sporadic relationship with a homeless ministry. The measurement to discern the community impact would be any community relationship with the rural church and increased and enhanced community relationships with the urban church. Through these interactions, it was hoped that both churches would become aware of God's role or ministry for them in the community.

These last two desired outcomes represent what missional ministry is all about, and, if the project has a long-term impact on the AME church, these outcomes would be essential to that end. Outcomes four and five looked at how the awareness of the missional model might impact the church in its future ministry. Because the project was short-term, the potential impact of these outcomes could be measured by the end of project audit of the participants. Their thoughts on missional ministry before and after the project would be compared and contrasted.

Outcome four was termed "kingdom focus." Since both congregations have practiced a traditional style of worship that emphasizes church versus kingdom growth, then a teaching outcome was for the congregations to understand that they are kingdom builders and not church builders. The plan for measurement would be from a survey during the project and the post-project audit. An overall goal was that the entire

congregation would gain this understanding but, at a minimum, that the project participants would achieve clarity.

The fifth and final outcome was to become a model for transitional ministry. Identifying whether this project could be a useful model for missional, transitional ministry within other AME churches has been a long-time desired outcome. The desire has been birthed to see the church become a leader in missional and community ministry. The plan for measurement was also based on the post-project audit and how many persons completed the project, which would also be an indicator of the viability of this project in other churches.

The hope was that this project may open an opportunity for a renewal of community-focused ministry. The AME church has a history of having a social, missional, benevolence ministry of aiding those who are underprivileged. Recently, however, its focus has been on survival because of declining membership. If the ministry returns to its original mission, then growth will follow. These two ministries need change, and this project offers a great opportunity to introduce them to missional ministry. If this template for change is proven, then there may be an opportunity for expansion of this project to other areas of the denomination.

Project and Participants Overview

The decision was to work this project between two different types of congregations. One is set in a rural congregation and the other in an urban one, but both congregations faced the same issues. Both were experiencing declining membership and also the next generation of family members were living outside of the walking or short distance driving proximity of the church.

The rural congregation was one hundred percent African American, located in southeast Texas, approximately fifty miles north of Houston. The congregation was comprised of two major families that were interconnected through marriage and lifetime friendships. Those who were not in the family were lifelong friends with someone in the family. The leadership of the church revolved around the daughters of the “Church Mother.” Total membership at the time of writing was twenty five adults and twenty children, with an average attendance of twelve to fifteen each Sunday. The church was 150 years old.

Immediately following the Civil War, an AME minister traveling through the South introduced the community to the AME church and a congregation was formed in the year 1866. The congregation became the second oldest AME congregation in the state of Texas. The denomination flourished in the South immediately after the Civil War because of its then radical social ideas—as was the case of the growth of this church in early years. At the height of its membership, the congregation had approximately 150 members; at the time of writing, the membership was less than fifty. The church’s rural setting was not the only detriment, as it also was impacted by being located on a slightly traveled back road, which complicated its ability to grow because it was not in an area that got a lot of attention. Basically, if one was not coming here, one probably would not pass here. Following are some of the relevant statistics of the rural church demographics:

- 100% were African American.
- Ten percent of the congregation were between 60-80 years of age.
- Forty percent were between 40-60 years of age.
- Twenty percent were between 20-40 years of age

- Thirty percent were less than twenty years of age.
- Eighty percent of members were women.

The urban church had a similar history. The church was 137 years old, located just west of downtown Houston. At the time of writing, it had a membership of 120 with an average attendance of fifty congregants. The church was named after its founding pastor and was one of the first African-American churches in the area. The membership was ninety-nine percent African American. The church had taken in less than five new members in the last five years. Church growth was stymied. The church had no interaction with the surrounding, ever-evolving, gentrified community.⁴

The urban church, like the rural one, had suffered from inconsistent leadership. Additionally, like the rural church, the congregants represented long-standing relationships that were comfortable with the status quo. On the surface, they asked for growth and change but to get that growth they knew they would have to relinquish some control. Unlike the rural church, the urban church could financially support the status quo but could not support the structural upgrades needed to improve the structure or make it more aesthetically appealing.

Following are some of the urban church, congregational demographics:

- Eighty percent were female.
- Sixty percent were over sixty years of age.
- Seventy percent were retired or semi-retired.
- The majority were middle income.

4. Gentrification is this process where developers move in and transition the community into an area that is unaffordable for the current inhabitants, thereby displacing them with higher income residents, totally changing the culture of the community.

Congregational Theology

Both congregations had what the authors of *Studying Congregations* classify as a romantic worldview.⁵ They believed in the power of miracles and that every tragedy comes with a spiritual purpose. They articulated how God works it out, even when they do not understand what is going on around them. They prayed for miracles and lifted each other up in prayer. They liked the idea of the pastor praying for them and anointing them with oil. The congregants looked forward to Communion service as an opportunity for spiritual renewal and considered it one of the most important services during the month. The motto of the church was “every worship service is a mountain top experience.” The songs the choir sang in worship were primarily metered hymns and “call and repeat” selections—those where a lead singer shouts a line and the choir members and the congregation repeat what was said. The music in both congregations did not work well for younger and more “charismatic” congregants, who enjoyed a more upbeat style of gospel singing.

Both congregations regarded themselves as pillars within their communities; however, they also recognized they were survivors. They had managed to continue existing even with dwindling membership. They saw themselves as pillars because they had been around for over one hundred years, but, because of their dwindling membership and small finances, they were not viewed in the community as a church to go to for help. They got the traditional visits from the politicians asking for votes, which supported their view that they were important to the community.

5. Ammerman and Carroll, *Studying Congregations*, 96.

Because of its structure, the AME denomination is not oriented to quick change. The denomination is structured as a connectional church presided over by a bishop. It had an Episcopal form of leadership; however, the local church had some important non-clergy leaders. In any church, if the local, non-clergy leaders (laity) do not address their roles, then the church suffers. Within both churches, the lay leadership was not strong. They looked for directions from the pastor in all areas. This lack of ownership allowed the church to suffer because it depended on each new pastor to re-invigorate the congregation. It also opened the church up to inconsistent leadership. Over the past years, some of the pastors had not demonstrated a practical understanding of leadership and organizational skills. Some had been young, enthusiastic, and excited about making improvements to the church, while others had been lethargic and only interested in maintaining the status quo. The church, therefore, suffered because of the inconsistent leadership.

Both congregations were in the throes of “isolated maturity” and “death.” This description of “isolated maturity” was because of the location and the leadership of both churches. The rural church was physically isolated, and the urban church was isolated by gentrification. Both churches were also isolated from other AME churches, operating in a vacuum. The members had not historically attended connectional meetings (meetings with other churches in the denomination); therefore, they did not have an accurate view of how the church should operate. They totally relied on the assigned pastors to give them their view of the church. Thus, one church suffered from nonchalant leadership and the other from domineering leadership. Because of these dynamics, the description of the churches’ status as “isolated maturity and death” was appropriate.

Cultural Identity

Both churches were facing cultural challenges. Organizationally, the congregants had not assumed leadership roles; they expected and looked to the pastor for direction. The lay leadership did not assume any ownership in identifying problems or solutions. They both had a bring-it-to-the-pastor approach to problems. Spiritually, they enjoyed worship but had to be encouraged to praise, which is probably representative of most churches. Also like most churches, both had congregational conflict, because two major families made up the membership of one and friendships and cliques made up the membership of the other.

Whatever happened in the homes of the main families spilled over into the church. If there was a divorce in the family, the church suffered. The pastor, therefore, had to be careful not to show any partiality, which he should not anyway. The consoling of a member, however, can have a long-term negative affect on not just one congregant but on an entire section of the church if not done uniformly.

Making any changes to the decor of the church can cause a negative response, “because the reason that table was there in the first place was because great grandmother put it there, so after she passed sixty-two years ago, we just kept it there to remind us of her.” These churches, like most churches, also suffered from the “fight-or-flight” syndrome. If a decision was made that a congregant did not agree with, then there was a strong possibility that the member would leave the church. So when presenting the opportunity of missional transition to the congregations, it was critical to ensure great buy-in by the membership.

The idea was that this project would help orient these churches toward working on the community and the culture instead of church growth. Some of the questions that this project addressed were the missional and purpose questions, such as, “What is God up to in my community?” and “How do these congregants see God moving in their communities?” The desire and focus was that the project would help these churches see that, while the community had changed, the church’s focal point had not, and that their goal should be kingdom growth, not church growth. The churches could then develop into ministries that would let the communities know that the scriptures were alive and operating within their lives. Whether these churches were right for this project or right for missional ministry would be answered during the project. What was known, however, was that the churches selected were undergoing challenges to their very existence, which made this project attractive for them.

Chapter II

Biblical, Historical, and Theological Backgrounds of the Missional Movement

The word “missional” has become a commonly used term in ministry circles, even though its meaning and history are not well understood. To illustrate some of the difficulty in defining and/or practicing missional behavior, here is how one denomination views it. Within the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC) is an organization called the Women’s Missionary Society (WMS). This group of women originated as a response to repair the worn-out clothes of rural pastors who were looking ragged and unkempt when they attended national meetings. Eventually, the WMS evolved into an organization that today is tasked with ministering to the personal needs of the less fortunate in their communities: the homeless, hungry, sick, and elderly. The WMS inadvertently stumbled onto a mission that resembles that of the missional church, “establishing the Kingdom of God on earth.” While the AMEC does not characterize itself as a missional church, like other denominations, it has a process of ministering to the unsaved by sending missionaries throughout the world. While they inadvertently help some of the disadvantaged, their primary purpose is more about expanding churches than kingdom-building. Therefore, this chapter will open with a brief look at the history of the movement and then defining the term “missional.”

The missional church movement began with the pioneer of the movement—Leslie Newbigin. “He is the author of the Willingen statement [explained later], as well as the

inspiration behind the book, *Missional Church*, and he remains for many the tacit authority in much missional and emergent church literature.”¹ Bishop Newbigin was a British-born missionary who returned to England after spending nearly four decades doing missionary work in India. What he found upon his return in 1974 was that England and North America had themselves become mission fields. Darrell Guder summarizes Newbigin’s impression of what he found upon returning: “What had once been a Christendom society was now post Christian and, in many ways, anti-Christian.”² He asserted that when the church becomes missional, it is not merely following the command of Matthew 28, where Jesus commands the disciples to go out into the world, because that is a narrow view of Jesus’s exhortation. That view “tends to make mission a burden rather than a joy, to make it part of the law rather than part of the gospel. Instead, mission results from an explosion of joy in the church community, which overflows into the world.”³

In Newbigin’s estimation, the church had lost the joy of doing kingdom proclamation and had relegated it to sending evangelists overseas. No longer was the church proclaiming the good news in such a manner that was exciting to the congregants. He penned, “When the church has been granted a taste of God’s presence, power, grace, and reconciliatory and unifying love, it is transformed into a living testimony to the gospel. When it exhibits the selfless and sacrificial love of Christ, living not for itself but for the sake of its neighbor, it lives provocatively as a sign and foretaste for the kingdom

1. Micheal Goheen, “Historical Perspective on the Missional Church Movement: Probing Leslie Newbigin’s Formative Influence,” *Trinity Journal for Theology & Ministry* 4 (2010): 63-84.

2. Darrell Guder, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 3.

3. Leslie Newbigin, *Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 116.

of God.”⁴ Alan Roxburgh and Scott Boren also commented on how the church did not have a missional focus, adding, “God is up to something in the world that is bigger than the church even though the church is called to be sign, witness, and foretaste of God’s purposes in the world.”⁵ Therefore, while being missional is the mission of the church, the church to which Newbigin returned was not that church. As Newbigin found, the church was no longer working the evangelical field in the industrialized world—they were failing to engage the postmodern culture with relevant expressions of ministry.

What does the word “missional” mean? Newbigin defines “missional” as faith in action. It is being concerned with the completion of God’s purpose in the creation of the world and of man within the world.⁶ In his view, the gospel of John purposes that every Christian has been sent by Jesus with the gospel into the communities in which they live for the purpose of kingdom-building, more specifically to bring in the kingdom of God. “The church is sent into the world to continue that which he (Jesus) came to do, in the power of the same spirit, reconciling people to God.”⁷ Jesus said, “As the father has sent me, I am sending you” (John 21:21). Newbigin, however, is not the final word on missional ministry. Since his time, practitioners of missional theology have sought to bring some clarity to what “missional” means.

First, mission is the external work of the church. For Roxburgh and Boren, “The missional church is a church that attracts, worships, equips, and then sends members out

4. Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 229.

5. Alan Roxburgh and Scott Boren, *Introducing the Missional Church: What it Is, Why it Matters, How to Become One* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2009), 20.

6. Leslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 34.

7. Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 230.

into the world to usher in the kingdom of God.”⁸ Guder, who is credited with bringing the word “missional” into widespread use through his book, *Missional Church*, describes the missional church this way: “The church is to represent God’s reign as its community, its servant, and its messenger.”⁹ He emphasizes that the purpose of the church is not to gather; rather, it is to send, to go out. Therefore, he defines “mission” as, “the result of God’s initiative, rooted in God’s purposes to restore and heal creation. Mission means sending and is the central biblical theme describing the purposes of God’s action in human history.”¹⁰

W. Rodman MacIlvaine also talks of the missional church as one that is working in the community in which it is located, that it is “a unified body of believers, intent on being God’s missional presence to the indigenous community that surrounds them, recognizing that God is already at work.”¹¹

Traditional models of ministry, or “attractional” churches according to these definitions, should be shifting their focus from creating programs that meet the needs of those within the building to equipping members to address the needs of those outside the building. David Bosch provides thirteen detailed characteristics of missional theology and ministry. Number eight of thirteen states, “Missional, *Missio Dei*, is God’s self-revelation as the one who loves the world, God’s involvement in and with the world, the

8. Roxburgh and Boren, *Introducing the Missional Church*, 30.

9. Guder, *Missional Church*, 103.

10. *Ibid.*, 4.

11. W. Rodman MacIlvaine III, “What Is the Missional Church Movement?” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 167 (January–March 2010): 91.

nature and activity of God, which embraces both the church and the world in which the church participates.”¹²

According to Roxburgh, churches primarily follow an attractional church model. He writes, “The attractional church model is based on the idea that people inherently want to belong to a church and that people will most likely attend the most attractive church possible.”¹³ The attractional model is one where people practice most of their Christianity inside the church. This was the model that was employed from the beginning of modernity (1500s), which was to get people to come into the church. Modernity represented that period when there were absolutes, and no one questioned the church. As Roxburgh puts it, “One of the marks of modernity is its quest for measurable, countable, certainty, which has resulted in an attempt to make everything explainable and controllable.”¹⁴ For him, as churches began to attempt to transition to a missional model, they found themselves in uncharted territories; they were “entering into a journey without any roadmaps to discover what God is up to in our neighborhoods and communities.”¹⁵ Roxburgh’s implication is that missional ministry is trial and error. This seems to say that the church needs to be open-minded to what God is up to in its communities, and that the primary missional focus is getting God’s purpose into the people, which was characterized by Jesus coming into the world. Stephanie Spellers expresses it this way:

12. David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2014), 10.

13. Roxburgh, *Introducing The Missional Church*, 18.

14. *Ibid.*, 58.

15. Alan Roxburgh, *Missional MAP Making: Skills for Leading in Times of Transition* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 16.

“It is not too much to say that Jesus’s incarnation was the ultimate expression of the missional love of God. God so loved the world and so wished to redeem the world, that God came among us to bring hope from despair, life from death.”¹⁶

Thus, according to these missional authors, in order to become God’s hand in the world, the focus should be directed at getting the church into the neighborhoods instead of the other way around, which has been the model since modernity. Michael Goheen, writes, “The word “missional” is used to describe not a specific activity of the church but the very essence and identity of the church as it takes up its role in God’s story and participation in God’s mission to the world.”¹⁷ Goheen directs attention to the kingdom-driven behavior of what being missional looks like—the behavior that ushers in the reign of God in this present age. Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk, however, provide a definition of “missional” that provides a good practical meaning of the term: “A missional church is a community of God’s people who live into the imagination that they are, by their very nature, God’s missionary people living as a demonstration of what God plans to do in and for all of creation in Jesus Christ.”¹⁸ For individuals, being missional is helping to bring God’s kingdom life to the community in which one lives.

Therefore, with all the definitions or descriptions of missional behavior, one will find that the theme of sending or going out will be central and repeated often in this paper. Research indicates that the missional church is a movement to spiritually and

16. Stephanie Spellers, “The Church Awake: Becoming The Missional People of God,” *Anglican Theological Review* 92, no. 1 (2006): 29-34.

17. Michael Goheen, *A Light To The Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2011), 4.

18. Alan J. Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk, *The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church to Reach a Changing World* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2006), xv.

physically impact the community in which the church operates, through demonstrating God's presence and desire for Christians by going out into the neighborhoods. Clayton Schmidt offers, "The sending forth of gathered worshippers is that pivotal moment when worship turns from adoration to action. The congregation has been centered to use the missional language for the work of Christian discipleship that occurs between one Sunday and another."¹⁹

Being missional involves three specific activities: 1) Going out or sending, 2) building relationships, and 3) being a blessing by meeting the needs of others. All of these are articulated in Luke 9–10, Gen. 12:3, and Matt. 28:19. Beginning with Newbigin, all of the missional practitioners direct readers to see that, missionally, God is calling and sending the church to be a voice in the communities and cultures in which the church operates.

Two organizations, Allelon, a network of missiologists, and The Gospel in Our Culture Network, have been integral in promoting the missional church movement. Additionally, *Introducing the Missional Church* fostered the popularity of churches transitioning to a missional model.

The work is the product of six missiologists who spent two years in intensive discussions attempting to develop a shared argument about the nature of the church. They sought to explore how the discipline of missiology (understanding God's mission in the world) is interrelated with ecclesiology (the study of the church). . . . The Key premise is that understanding the nature of the church is foundational for being able to clarify the purpose of the church. . . . The result was the construction of a missional ecclesiology or in short hand, the concept of the missional church.²⁰

19. Clayton Schmidt, *Sent and Gathered: A Worship Manual for the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2009), 155.

20. Craig Van Gelder, *The Ministry of the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), 16.

Historical Foundations

While Newbigin is regarded as the catalyst of the modern missional movement, other precursors contributed to the evolution of what it has become today. The missional movement had at least three phases: 1) A realization that a transition needed to occur between the church's missionary ideology and the missional ideology; 2) A catalyst was needed to voice the transitional phase into fruition; and 3) a vehicle was needed to popularize or give the movement traction. As Roxburgh says, it is necessary to bring the phrase "missional" from obscurity and banality, even though people still might not agree on what it means. He affirms, "Missional is therefore not a program or project that some people in the church do from time to time as in a mission trip. No, the church's very nature is to be Missional, to be God's missionary people."²¹

Phase one started in 1952 at the International Missionary Council (IMC) meeting in Willingen, Germany. There, the theological framework (although not the term "missional") of *missio Dei* was thoroughly discussed. An important part of this formulation was the recognition that mission was central to the church's being.²² The IMC meeting in Willingen resulted in the formation of the following statement: "Mission has its source in the love of the father who sent his son to reconcile all things to himself. The son has sent the spirit to gather his church together and empower it for mission. This church is sent by Jesus to continue his mission and this defines its very nature."²³ The IMC statement at Willingen ushered in a new perspective on how the church viewed

21. Roxburgh, *Missional Leader*, 2.

22. Goheen, "Historical Perspectives," 63-83.

23. *Ibid.*, 68.

missionary work. It especially freed it from its geographical limitations: “The church is not only sent to every area of the world but it is also sent to its immediate neighborhood.”²⁴

The second phase, the catalyst, occurred over the next fifteen years after Willingen, as Newbigin wrote, spoke, and lectured on the missionary work of the church. One of the concepts for which he fought hard was that the church must act on the world rather than the world acting on the church.

The missional church movement has entered its current, third phase led by the work of the Gospel and Culture Network and the publication of Roxburgh’s *Introducing the Missional Church*. The term “missionary” was re-termed “missional” and has captured the imagination of Christians across almost every denomination. Some of the questions that are now being addressed are: “What is a missional encounter with this culture? What is God up to in this generation and how does the church make it happen?” Roxburgh quotes how a person he was mentoring one day exclaimed, “Alan, I get it, it’s all about Jesus and the kingdom. It is not about church programs or church growth.”²⁵ Just to be clear, God’s missional encounter with humanity is not new—it did not start with the evangelistic efforts of the IMC or the realization from Newbigin that something was wrong. There is a biblical grounding for the world’s encounter with God that was there from the beginning. In Gen.12:3, God declares to Abraham that he and his descendants will be a blessing to all with whom they come in contact. The world will be blessed by the people of God. The world needed healing, and, through the seed of

24. Goheen, “Historical Perspectives,” 69.

25. Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*, 38.

Abraham, God would bring that healing. Goheen writes, “All nations are in rebellion in their relationship to God. The solution comes in the promise to Abraham. God chooses Abraham and gives him the promise that the blessing and harmony of God’s good creation will be restored through Abraham’s seed.”²⁶

The theology of mission and being missional can be described as the sending and going of God’s people. This sending and going of God’s people started in Genesis and was affirmed by Jesus in Luke 10 and Matthew 28. In their sending and going, God’s people are a blessing for those with whom they come in contact. Guder writes, “We have come to see that mission is not merely an activity of the church. Rather, mission is the result of God’s initiative, rooted in God’s purpose to restore and heal creation. Mission means sending and it is the central biblical theme describing God’s purpose and of God’s action in human history.”²⁷

The church, therefore, is the missional arm of God; however, the church lost its focus, specifically in Europe and North America. This was Newbigin’s alert to the church upon his return from India, because it was not addressing what God ordained for its purpose. Bosch writes, “Mission is the very nature of God. The classical doctrine of the *missio Dei* is God the Father sending the son and God the father and the son sending the Holy Spirit. Yet now it expands into another movement (missional), Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world.”²⁸ The church is called to alert the world to the healing power of God’s Kingdom. The formation of the New Testament *ecclesia* is so

26. Goheen, *A Light To The Nations*, 28-29.

27. Guder, *Missional Church: A Vision*, 4.

28. Nussbaum, Stan, *A Readers Guide to Transforming Mission* (Orbis Books, Maryknoll, 2005), 95.

God's people can be a blessing to the nations. Newbigin writes, "The Bible is concerned with God's purpose of blessing for all the nations. It is concerned with the completion of God's purpose in the creation of the world. It is not just concerned with offering an escape for the redeemed soul, but with the action of God to bring history to its true end."²⁹ Bringing the good news of God's salvific plan of restoration is echoed in Old Testament proclamation. In Isa. 52:7, the prophet proclaims, "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, your God reigns."

The ministry of the organized church is being challenged by a postmodern society to resume its biblical mandate to bless the world and usher in God's reign. The challenge is because the church must meet its relevancy to this present age. Roxburgh writes, "In 1980, it was observed, churches had lost touch with the way the biblical text spoke of God's mission in and for the world and why the central theme of the Kingdom of God had just about disappeared from the preaching and teaching of the churches."³⁰

Missional theology is one of going; the church is a called and sent people. Kingdom people are called from their past and sent into the world to encourage and share with others. "Bishop Newbigin and others have helped us to see that God's mission is calling and sending us, the church of Jesus Christ to be a missionary church in our own societies, in the cultures in which we find ourselves."³¹ The World Council of Churches, as early as 1960, defined mission as doing God's work in the world, stating, "Mission is

29. Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 33-34.

30. Roxburgh, *Introducing the Missional Church*, 10.

31. Guder, *Missional Church: A Vision*, 5.

primarily focused on doing God's justice in the world and not with increasing church membership."³² In other words, the church must be concerned with more than individual salvation and the afterlife but also the here and now. In modernity, there was a cultural shift of the church from going out and seeking new converts to bringing in new converts. In Guder's words, "The biblical message of salvation underwent a reductionism that resulted in emphasis upon individual salvation and the afterlife or getting to heaven."³³ Guder is recalling that the early church was a community of mission, founded by converts, which meant growth required outreach to those outside of the church. That is more than waiting for people to come into the building. Therefore, a missional approach becomes an in to worship and out to serve mandate. In the next section, the biblical support for this missional ministry mandate will be examined.

Biblical and Theological Foundations

Missiologists, such as Newbigin and Guder, agree that the missional purpose of the church is to establish the reign of God on earth. The theology of the movement is that God is a sending and a reigning God, who sends his people out into the world to be a blessing, as illustrated in Genesis 12, Matthew 28, and Luke 9–10, which are just a few of the biblical texts that support a sending theology. As John 3:16 reminds, God sent his son, and, in the gospel of accounts, his son sent the disciples. Guder writes, "Whatever one believes about the church needs to be found in and based on what the Bible teaches.

32. Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 8.

33. Darrell Guder, *The Church as Missional Community: The Community of the Word, Toward an Evangelical Ecclesiology* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2005), 118.

Moreover, these biblical perspectives need to be made explicit.”³⁴ The referenced texts—Genesis, Matthew, and Luke—will be elaborated on later in this document, representing cross sections of texts that describe what it means to be missional in the plan of God.

According to Van Gelder, the Bible demonstrates that in each of the Old Testament covenants, God had a plan to extend his fellowship to the world and not just to the Hebrews. The Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic covenants were intended to be a blessing for the world. Van Gelder writes,

In each of these covenants, God made it clear that the larger horizon of God’s intention was always the world. It is important to understand that God lodged the particularity of redemption for the whole world in the selection and election of Israel. However, Israel’s election was never about privileged status, but rather about being selected for witness and service to the world.³⁵

Missional is how God’s reign can be defined. In order to meet this purpose, biblical texts directly support this evangelistic plan.

An overarching theme of the missional purpose of the church is that it is a benevolent community, as illustrated in 2 Corinthians 8. As the church in Corinth was asked to support the needy in Jerusalem, so the benevolence of the church showed it to be a caring community. Van Gelder states that God did not intend for Israel to be about privileged status but rather service to the world³⁶—a city on a hill . . . a light to the nations (Matt. 5:14-16). He cites Mark 10:45, indicating that Jesus places a great emphasis on service: “For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

34. Guder, *Missional Church: A Vision*, 11.

35. Craig Van Gelder, *The Ministry of the Missional Church: A Community Led by the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), 89.

36. Ibid.

Benevolent ministry did not start in the New Testament; rather, it was ordained in the Old Testament. God's directive for a missional connection between the benevolent and messianic plan of God occurs in Leviticus. Research revealed how the practice of leaving crops in the field for the less fortunate, described in Leviticus 23, directly leads to the meeting of Boaz and Ruth in Ruth 3. While gleaning in Boaz's field, Ruth catches the eye of Boaz, they marry, and now are listed in the genealogy of David and Jesus. It is also worth noting that the ancestor of Boaz is thought to be Rahab the prostitute who hid the spies in Joshua 2. These Old Testament passages demonstrate not only how Israel is to bless the nations around them but also how, through their conversion by interactions, the peoples of the world partner in bringing in God's Kingdom. Rahab's acknowledgment to the two spies that Joshua sent informed them that she had heard of their God. "Her testimony is another indication of how the mission of the good news was getting around to all the nations."³⁷ Therefore, this communal, missional practice of leaving gleanings in the field for the less fortunate had a unique eschatological consequence.

The biblical narrative of the missional movement has its origin in the Old Testament. As stated, God's covenant relationship with the Hebrews had an intentional, missional purpose. Therefore, if one only looks at New Testament passages as being missional, one will have missed or omitted thousands of years of God blessing creation. God has consistently been a God of blessings to the world. Beginning with the fall in the Garden, God promised that he would create a barrier between humanity and sin. He stated in Gen. 3:15 that the seed of a woman would crush Satan's head. This promise is a

37. Walter Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as a Light to the Nations* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 19.

blessing to the world, in that it promises that the world will have a weapon against evil. The missional plan of the Old Testament begins with the promise of Gen. 12:3, where God tells Abram, “I will bless those who bless you and whoever curses you I will curse and all the peoples of the earth will be blessed by you.” This text illustrates God’s intention that the blessed people of God are intended to be a blessing to everyone with whom they come in contact.

As Walter Kaiser points out, the blessing that would come through Abraham refers back to a blessing already announced after the fall of Adam and Eve. As God’s antidote for the curse brought on by sin, he would send a male descendant from the woman Eve as he had promised in Gen. 3:15. The curse affected the human race universally, but no less extensive in its potential was the healing antidote promised by God. His offer was enlarged, as we shall see, in the promise given to Abram (Gen. 12:1-3).³⁸ The missional intention, announced as early as Genesis, was to bless the world through a relationship with the peoples of God. Claus Westerman also expresses this theme: “The immediate effect of the blessing promised to Abraham is that he will become a great people and his name will be great.”³⁹ This blessing also has the added effect of Abraham and the Jewish nation being a blessing to those with whom they come in contact. “The blessing promised to Abraham has two effects: on Abraham himself, in the history of Israel, and on the people with whom he comes in contact with: and you are to be a blessing to others (Gen. 12:3).”⁴⁰

38. Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament*, xiii.

39. Claus Westerman, *Genesis 12-36: A Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 149.

40. Ibid.

The Hebrews, a group of called-out people, are tasked with being a blessing to the world. They are tasked with living and proclaiming the kingdom of God by their lifestyles. Wright explains their role:

Thus the blessing of Abraham becomes self-replicating. Those who are blessed are called to be a blessing beyond themselves—and this is one feature that makes it so profoundly missional. For if we see ourselves (as we should according to Paul in Galatians) as those who have entered into the blessing of Abraham through faith in Christ, then the Abrahamic commission becomes ours also—“be a blessing.”⁴¹

Goheen writes, “Gen. 12:3 and Exod. 19:3-6 provide a hermeneutical lens through which to see clearly the role and identify of God’s people in the Old Testament. . . . God will pursue his purposes for all creation through Israel, first making Abraham a great nation and then blessing all nations and all creation through that nation.”⁴² Wright espouses that this blessing is intentional:

This is not a randomly sprinkled blessing. It is a deliberate act that will activate God’s promise of blessing for the. The nations will indeed be blessed as Abraham was, but only because they will have turned to the only source of blessing, Abraham’s God, and identified themselves with the story of Abraham’s people. They will know the God of Abraham.⁴³

Being a people who bless others is the reason to be Christian—they are the hope in a pre-eschatology world. Bruce Waltke posits, “Until Christ comes, Abraham and his descendants play a representative messianic role and prefigure Christ. The promise is not to today’s unbelieving ethnic Israel but to Jesus Christ and his church.”⁴⁴ The promise of

41. Christopher J. Wright, *The Mission of God’s People: Biblical Theology of God’s People* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 68.

42. Goheen, *A Light to the Nations*, 49.

43. Christopher Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking The Bible’s Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2006) 219.

44. Bruce Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 206.

being a blessing to all people is repeated in Genesis at least four other times (18:18; 22:18; 26:4; and 28:14).

Isa. 42:1 is another passage reflecting that Israel is to be the vehicle of social justice in the world. Through modeling servant missional ministry, the church is called to be an agent of change. The prophet writes in Isa. 42:6-7, “Here, is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom I delight; I have put my spirit on him, he will bring forth justice to the nations.” Lloyd Petersen writes, “while the concern for social justice pervades the whole book of Isaiah, the servant of Isa. 42:1-9 is seen as one who will bring forth justice to the nations and will not rest until he has established justice in the earth.”⁴⁵ Walter Brueggemann identifies “the servant” as Israel:

While among theologians there is no agreement about the identity of the servant, the issue is problematic when conventional theologians seek to identify the servant as Jesus the Messiah. However, here it is enough to assume that “my servant” is the people Israel. That appellation draws on the entire history of Israel that affirms that Israel is related to Yahweh as servant and that the life of Israel consists in obedience to the will of Yahweh.⁴⁶

The mission of the servant in Isaiah 42 is similar to the mission of Abraham in Gen. 12:3.

Brueggemann adds,

Whatever may have been the original intent, subsequent Christian reading has found here a sweeping mandate for worldwide mission for a renovation of the relation the world has to Yahweh and the relation people have for each other. Israel’s servanthood makes a new day possible in the world, a theme already anticipated by the programmatic statement of Gen. 12:3, “In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”⁴⁷

45. Lloyd Petersen, *Reading the Bible after Christendom* (Harrisburg: Herald Press, 2012), 142.

46. Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 42.

47. *Ibid.*, 44.

The mission of Israel as a light to the nations and a blessing to the world is also echoed by Ernest Wright:

Second Isaiah (39-46) presents the people of God with an eloquent and deeply moving portrayal of their mission, one fulfilled in Christ, and become the pattern for the church's life in the world. Not only has the servant suffered for his own sins (Isa. 40:2, 42:18-25), but he has vicariously borne in his body the wounds inflicted by the world's evils. His present mission is that he continues his humble appearance before the world and serves as a mediator of the redemptive righteousness of God, of a covenant to the people, a light to the nations.⁴⁸

In this passage, God is declaring that Israel and now the church are to be missional voices spreading the good news of the kingdom.

Many psalms also have missional themes. George Peters notes, "Missionary preaching is supported in the Psalms by more than 175 references of a universalistic note relating to the nations of the world. Many of them bring hope of salvation to the nations. Indeed the Psalter is one of the greatest missionary books in the world, though seldom seen from that point of view."⁴⁹ Peters listed some psalms that he felt had a particularly missionary message, such as 2, 33, 66, 72, and 98. He did not mention Psalm 67, which has been an often paraphrased, repeated message. Churchgoers often can be heard saying, "When praises go up, blessings come down." That call and response is a paraphrase of Psa. 67:5-6. Kaiser, however, believes it is also a direct reference to the Abrahamic promise of Gen. 12:3 and even a repeat of the Aaronic blessing of Numbers 6. He notes:

It is interesting to note that that Psalmist has directly applied to all the peoples and nations on earth what the high priest Aaron and his fellow priests bestowed on the nation Israel. It is from this theme of enlargement that we boldly announce that this is indeed a missionary psalm. Nor can it escape our attention that the purpose

48. G. Ernest Wright, "The Old Testament Basis for the Christian Mission": *The Theology of Christian Mission* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1961), 25.

49. George Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions* (Chicago: Moody, 1972), 116.

for this enlarged blessing upon all the of the world is specifically so, “that your ways may be known on earth.”⁵⁰

Derek Kidner echoes Kaiser’s conclusion as he observes, “If a psalm was ever written around the promises to Abraham, that he would be both blessed and made a blessing, it could have well been Psalm 67.”⁵¹ The Psalmist is declaring that, through the blessing and prosperity of the nation of Israel, nations will come to see that if they follow after Israel’s God, they too will be blessed. Craig Boyles has this observation: “Psalm 67 shows us that election does not mean that God has favorites but simply that he has a chosen channel of blessing for all. Election has to do with his means of extending that blessing to all.”⁵² Today, this blessing is transferred to the church as outlined in the New Testament discourse of Jesus. Kaiser pens, “The Psalmist and the revealing word of God expected the people of Israel to experience a real change in their lives. He wanted them to be the agents through which the blessing of God would come to all the peoples on earth. This purpose for Israel to be a missionary force is a continuation of the theme first noted in Gen. 12:3.”⁵³

While the missional movement is birthed in the Old Testament, it is cemented by Jesus in the New Testament. Jesus makes no secret of his intentions because he announces in the Jewish temple what he has come to do: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim

50. Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament*, 29.

51. Derek Kidner, *A Commentary on the Psalms*, vol. 2 (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 1971), 236.

52. Craig Broyles, *Psalms*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 280.

53. Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament*, 31.

freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18-19). In *Re-Jesus*, authors Michael Frost and Allen Hirsch point out that Jesus shows love and compassion for the oppressed: "We must serve the marginalized and downtrodden in Jesus's name. This may mean we sometimes stand in direct opposition to systems and lifestyles that engender oppression—be they political, social, or religious systems."⁵⁴ Jesus states that his gospel is not just about the eschatological kingdom, but it is also about the here and now. Mortimer Arias calls Jesus's announcement in Luke 4 the initiation of "Holistic Evangelization, that there should be no separation between the word and the deeds of our ministries."⁵⁵ This is the message that Jesus was instilling into his disciples. Guder writes, "It is important to note here that this central theme shaped for Jesus the sense of his mission as well as the mantle of his mission that he passed on to his followers. . . . It was this message that Jesus placed on the lips of his disciples whom he sent out to proclaim the good news, the Kingdom of Heaven has come near."⁵⁶

Luke 10 demonstrates the dual purpose of the church as a sent people to be a blessing, again demonstrating biblical support for a missional process. For David Rhoades, "Luke's gospel portrays God as one who is determined to lift the lowly and feed the hungry. Luke calls for people to repent and receive the spirit of God which will empower them to oppose oppression and thereby provide a counter cultural community

54. Michael Frost and Allen Hirsch, *Re-Jesus: A Wild Messiah for a Missional Church* (Sydney: Strand Publishing, 2009), 57.

55. Mortimer Arias, *Announcing the Reign of God: Evangelism and the Subversive Memory of Jesus* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1984), 5.

56. Guder, *Missional Church: A Vision*, 89.

that models what the world be should be like.”⁵⁷ The narrative of Jesus sending out the seventy disciples, found in Luke 10:1-12, brings out a couple of interesting things about being sent and to whom they are being sent to minister. First, Luke is not a Jew, and it appears that his audience is not necessarily Jews. As Bosch notes, “Luke was perhaps the only Gentile author of the New Testament book and wrote for Christians who were predominantly of Gentile origin. Moreover, he appears to have in view many communities rather than one single community.”⁵⁸

Jesus’s ministry takes a symbolic and literal shift in Luke 10, where he first sends out twelve, then later seventy disciples. This shift changes the focus of Jesus’s ministry from one of training disciples and ministering to the Jewish community to ministering to the world. Goheen observes:

First, the number of disciples sent by Jesus are significant: Jesus first sends twelve then seventy-two. These numbers are symbolic. We have noted that the twelve apostles (the foundation of eschatological Israel) represent the twelve tribes of ancient Israel. The twelve form the nucleus around which ancient Israel is to be gathered. Similarly, when Jesus sends the seventy-two this symbolically represents the universal goal Jesus has for his message. According to rabbinic thought, based on the table of nations in Genesis 10, seventy-two nations represents the whole world. The message is first for the Jews, who are to be gathered and restored to their missional vocation. But the sending of the seventy indicates that this gathering will ultimately embrace all nations.⁵⁹

The sending of the twelve represented Israel; however, the sending of the seventy-two means this is a missional message to the entire world. Jesus was sending the seventy-two out into neighborhoods and communities where he intended to go, and these disciples

57. David Rhoads, “Diversity in the New Testament,” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 35, no. 5 (October 2008): 356.

58. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 86.

59. Goheen, *A Light to the Nations*, 98.

were preparers of the way. The missional message of Luke is that one enters into the communities where people live in order to understand and know who they are. Roxburgh offers,

Luke is articulating a gospel insight we have largely lost. . . . Perhaps, Luke is suggesting that a primary way of discerning God's plan is when we re-enter the life of the local people, listen to their stories, and love them deeply without feeling the need to sell or make a pitch or assume we already know what they need and what the gospel ought to look like in this place and time.⁶⁰

Another text that represents the sending presence of God is the Great Commission text.

Guder states that the church is sent to be a unique community establishing God's reign.⁶¹

He references John 20:21 and Matt. 28:19-20 to illustrate that the church has a purpose or a mandate to go out and not just gather.

The missional church, the sending of God's people into the world, and the working of the people of God ministering in the community, are represented in both the Old and New Testaments. From God declaring that his people would be a light to the nations and a blessing to all that they come in contact within Genesis, to Jesus sending out the seventy in the gospel of Luke, God wants his people to interact in the community. In fact, two phrases, *missio Dei* (the mission or sending of God) and *actio Dei* (the action of God) represent the sending and acting of God's people in the world.⁶² According to Newbigin, in "Jesus's statement in the Gospel according to John, every Christian has been sent by Jesus with the gospel together in community to those in the surrounding

60. Alan J. Roxburgh, *Missional: Joining God In The Neighborhood* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011), 136.

61. Guder, *Missional Church: A Vision*, 103.

62. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 420.

culture for the sake of the king and His Kingdom.”⁶³ For Frost, this “challenges us to see the biblical face of Jesus and recognize the need to model our missional lifestyle on His.”⁶⁴ Everything Christians do should be about establishing the kingdom.

The Missional Challenge

Since the Bible supports a biblical mandate for the missional movement, the questions include: How is this mandate being practiced by churches today? What are some of the practices that represent churches engaging missionally within the communities where they reside? What are the challenges to missional ministry?

One of the first challenges is in the perception of the word “missional.” What does it mean to the traditional church? Just as the term “missionary” went through a transition to the term “missional,” denominations are also going through a transition regarding how the term is understood. One denomination in particular is the AMEC, which is the oldest denomination of people of color in America. The mission statement of the AMEC is “to minister to the social, spiritual, and physical development of all people.”⁶⁵ The church lists as one of its purposes, “providing continuing programs which will enhance the entire social development of all people.”⁶⁶ Those two statements imply that the AMEC denomination places a priority on being involved within the communities in which it operates. The church had a missional concern to ensure that they knew what

63. Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 230.

64. Michael Frost, *The Road to Missional: Journey to the Center of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011), 87.

65. Johnny Barbour, *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church* (Nashville: AMEC Sunday School Union, 2016), 23.

66. *Ibid.*, 13.

was going on in the community. Even so, while the church was missionally concerned, it never actually operated as a missional church.

Like the AMEC, the Episcopal Church also has in its mission statement a goal to restore persons to God: “The mission of the church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ”⁶⁷ and that the “church pursues its mission as it prays and worships, proclaims justice, peace, and love.”⁶⁸ While that mission statement sounds good, the question is how to make the transition, or how to train persons for missional ministry? Like some other churches, the Crossing, an Episcopalian church in Boston says, “We need to form leaders who are trained for the kingdom, that is, trained to facilitate our collective development as missional communities to the reign of God.”⁶⁹ Clearly, transitioning from an attractional church ministry to missional ministry is not easily done. The AMEC and the Episcopal Church, like the majority of all churches, operate on an attractional church model. Worship and community involvement require that the community comes into the church and not that the church goes into the community. As the research demonstrates, the problem with the attractional church model is that it no longer works for the post-millennial generation.

The number of people outside of the church (unchurched) continues to grow. It is not that people stopped believing in a divine Creator, but they have stopped believing that they need the organized church to honor him. David Kinnaman of the Barna Group writes, “Our research shows that many of those outside of Christianity, especially

67. Stephanie Spellers, “Becoming the Missional People of God,” *Anglican Theological Review* 92, no. 1 (2009): 35.

68. Ibid.

69. Spellers, “Becoming the Missional People of God,” 38.

younger adults, have little trust in the Christian faith . . . and they reject Jesus because they feel rejected by Christians.”⁷⁰ This mistrust is against Christianity in general, not a specific denomination. There is a growing number of persons who believe the church no longer represents the values Jesus taught. Table 2.1 shows some of these dynamics.

Table 2.1. The Outsiders—A Growing Part of Our Society⁷¹

Generation	Age	Outside Christianity	Segment Size U.S. Pop.
Young Busters	14–29	40%	24 million
Mosaics	18–41	37%	34 million
Boomers	32–60	27%	21 million
Elders	61+	23%	12 million

The Barna group research revealed six themes that popped out as reasons the church is struggling. Survey respondents stated that the church is “hypocritical, too focused on getting converts, anti-homosexual, sheltered, too political, and judgmental.”⁷² While all of these are significant, “too focused on getting converts” resonates because it links to the loss of the church’s missional focus. As articulated in Luke 4, the missional focus of Jesus—preaching good news to the poor, recovery of sight to the blind, and setting the captives free—is not being observed by the world.

Overall, young people do not see the church, described in Matthew 25, as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the prisoners, or taking care of the sick. Rather, they view the church as growing for the sake of growth. The Barna Group, however, also

70. David Kinnaman, *UnChristian: What a New Generation Thinks about Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), 11.

71. Kinnaman, *UnChristian*, 18.

72. Ibid.

identified numbers in their surveys that reflect people wanting the church to be that kind of church. This circles back to the missional purpose of the church and the need and desire for examples of churches that are practicing this ministry.

Implementing Missional Change

In *Introducing the Missional Church*, Roxburgh and Boren ominously pen, “Beware of formulas for creating missional churches! And beware of Missional Church models!”⁷³ Since the missional concept became popular, almost every denomination has embarked on a missional path, including Emergent, Traditional/Attractional, Mega, and small urban churches. All are rebranding themselves to meet the expectations of the present generation. Through a missional style of ministry, the church can re-establish its presence within the community; however, the question of how it transitions from the attractional style of ministry to a missional paradigm is the subject of this section. Specifically, how will this project attempt to usher in a missional imagination to a traditional attractional church model?

First, the question must be asked, “Why do people change anything? Change requires some level of dissatisfaction with one’s present situation. People do not usually change if everything is going right. People usually change because either they see the danger in where they are or they see an opportunity before them. There is an adage in the offshore oil and gas industry called the “burning platform syndrome.” It refers to how a person looks at opportunities. One can either see the imminent danger of the burning platform or the opportunity in the shark-infested waters. Both options are not great, but one appears to be better than the other. The church is similar in its outlook. Changing

73. Roxburgh and Boren, *Introducing the Missional Church*, 22.

how it views its mission may be seen by some as impending death by the burning platform or the opportunity of missional ministry, which to some seems like shark-infested water. So, the church changes, like most organizations, because it is no longer satisfied with its current results. For the church, the reason for change is usually one of three factors, declining membership, no growth, or declining finances. As the Barna Group has warned, a major factor in the church not getting positive results is that it is no longer addressing the needs of this current generation. “Our research shows that many of those outside of Christianity, especially younger adults, have little trust in the Christian faith; . . . they admit their emotional and intellectual barriers go up around Christians and they feel rejected by them.”⁷⁴

To be clear, this is not talking about the state of the church worldwide in terms of growth but specifically the churches in North America and particularly in American communities. Roxburgh offers this footnote about the state of the church:

Talking about the death of the church is just bad theology, sociology, and biblical imagination. Across the world, the church is moving through incredible transformation and growth despite terrible hardship. Most of the church is no longer in Europe and North America; it’s in the Southern hemisphere and sub-Saharan Africa. In these areas Christian life is vibrant.⁷⁵

Coincidentally, one of the early uses of the term “missional” was applied to Bishop Tozar who was called the Missional Bishop of Central Africa. While the church overall was growing, the community, neighborhood, and small urban churches were facing a slow death because they no longer were addressing the needs of the community in which they operated. As Robert Quinn describes it, “Slow death begins when someone or some

74. Kinnaman, *UnChristian*, 11.

75. Roxburgh, *The Missional Leader*, 39.

organization, confronting the dilemma to make deep organizational change or accepting the status quo, rejects the option for deep change.”⁷⁶ Shifting from an attractional church model to a missional model of ministry is one of deep organizational change. The attractional model focuses on creating a welcome and loving atmosphere inside the church, welcoming folks one at a time. In contrast, the missional model is about creating that loving and welcoming atmosphere outside of the church, ministering to “whole communities” instead of individuals. Because of its outside focus, however, it is a model that does not come with the objective growth measures of success found in the attractional church model. Mega churches may say that their growth demonstrates their missional status, but are they changing the neighborhoods, communities, and cities in which they operate? Certainly, there are examples of large urban churches making impacts in their communities. Chris Seay and Rudy Rasmussen, pastors at Ecclesia and St. Johns (respectively) in Houston, are making a difference with two different styles of missional ministry. For two that are making a difference, however, there are more that are growing but not making an impact.

In addition to measurement concerns, the missional model has a perception problem. It is perceived as having a lack of respect for other ministry models. Frost and Hirsch write,

We are advocating a wholesale change in the way Christians do and be the church and, because of this, ours is not necessarily a popular message . . . and yet because of this we feel compelled to lovingly challenge the church with the task of dismantling so many of the arcane institutional structures it is now beholden to and bravely face the future with imagination and courage.⁷⁷

76. Robert Quinn, *Deep Change: Discovering the Leader Within* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996), 18.

77. Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), ix.

Again, the missional movement encourages this thought because, as Hirsch writes, “Missional leaders don’t see changing the church as central to their cause; they want to change the whole world. . . . One cannot be infected by this wonderful, life-giving virus and remain content with church—business as usual.”⁷⁸ Besides arrogance, what are some of the problems of transitioning to a missional ministry?

For one, inculcating a missional ministry requires a certain level of skills by the leader for this transition to be successful. Therefore, specifically, what were some of the challenges this model would face locally? There were at least four major challenges to this project: 1) paradigm shifts, 2) community trust, 3) measuring success, and 4) congregant apprehension. Inspiring the congregation to be open to a different mental model of ministry required a shift in everything they had been doing for years. Both the urban and rural congregations were resistant to change. Changing their mental models required them not to see the old measures as the measures for success, such as how many members a program would bring into the church. They needed to appreciate that missional ministry was not a program but a process and a shift of community interaction. Adjusting a church’s concept of missional ministry was complicated because the majority of the congregants represented an era that saw missional work as missionaries, doing evangelistic work in remote areas of the world, as opposed to working in the neighborhoods in which they lived or where their churches were located. Therefore, when the word “missional” was spoken, such congregants did not think it referred to their community.

78. Frost, *The Road To Missional*, 21.

Another challenge was getting the church to be actively involved in the community, working not just on the church grounds but partnering with the neighborhoods. Adding to this challenge was the reality that a number of the members in urban environments did not live in the community of the church. They did not, therefore, readily have an interest in being a part of and spending time in that community. On the other hand, while rural area churches may have a centralized community, they do not have the areas of concern that spur interest. The rural church involved in this research reflected a sentiment of the rural churches in that area that if “missional” meant being active in the area, then they already were doing that.

The leader needed a way to determine the commitment of the participants and, since he was the pastor of the church, his commitment was needed to move forward into the transition phase. If the project leader were not the pastor of the church, then he would communicate and negotiate with the pastor what might be a plan to follow the project. Since the project leader was the pastor, he needed either to implement a path to transition to a missional model or recognize that there was no desire to continue. The leader first needed to identify if there was sufficient commitment to the process before moving forward. Regarding such a leader’s commitment, Wayne Menking writes,

The work and purpose of pastoral care is about helping people leave what is old and move into what is new. Such movement, just like the Exodus, does not come without adversity or conflict. Thus, the transition from what is old to what is new always requires that the one leading the transition must rise to the occasion.

Pastoral care and leadership is helping people do just that, rise to the occasion.⁷⁹

If a transition is to occur then the leader or pastor must appreciate the challenges that come with the territory.

⁷⁹ Wayne Menking, *When All Else Fails: Rethinking Our Pastoral Vocation in Times of Stuck* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2013), 91.

The leader must be committed to the transition and not buckle under the resistance of those who are unwilling to change. Understanding some of these challenges is addressed in the description of the Disciplines of Transformational Leadership in the Furr, Bonem, and Herrinton text, *Leading Congregational Change*. The authors state that this resource “helps followers embrace a vision of a preferred future.”⁸⁰ They further emphasize that for a congregation to achieve long-term transformation, all of the disciplines must be mastered. Following is an overview:

Discipline 1: Generating and Sustaining Creative Tension. Creative tension occurs when a compelling vision of the future and a clear picture of current reality are held in continuous juxtaposition.⁸¹ The leader’s role is to create some tension within the congregants that their current ministry may not be meeting the needs of the community. If the congregants realize that they are not meeting the biblical mandate of kingdom living, then they may want to modify their ministries. The leader has to sustain this tension while at the same time minimizing anxiety.

Discipline 2: Harnessing the Power of Mental Models. Mental models are the images, assumptions, and stories used to interpret the world. Mental models help take complex dynamics and simplify them in order to deal with them on a routine basis.⁸² The leader must be aware that the mental model that congregants have may be inaccurate; however, if they believe this to be true, then the leader must address it and not overlook it. Therefore, the challenge for the leader is to help congregants realize that their current

80. James Furr, Mike Bonem, and Jim Herrington, *Leading Congregational Change: A Practical Guide for the Transformational Journey* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 95.

81. Ibid., 100.

82. Ibid., 113.

mental models of how church should operate may be incorrect or incomplete. People are less resistance to change if they realize they have a wrong view of a situation.

Discipline 3: Enabling Team Learning. Team learning is the power of synergy. “It is the process of enabling a team to produce results far beyond its combined capabilities as individuals.”⁸³ The leader’s challenge here is to create shared goals, some of which must be shared with the community.

Discipline 4: Practicing Systems Thinking. Traditional analytical thinking looks at each part separately. “Systems thinking considers interactions between different parts and causes that may not be obvious.”⁸⁴ The congregants must realize that the church is part of a community and thereby part of a system. How the community prospers reflects on how the church prospers.

In preparing to implement these changes in the participating churches, the works of others who have implemented such change were reviewed. First, David Bosch’s book, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Missions*, looks at the historical, postmodern paradigm for understanding and addressing the missional church. Another work was Michael Goheen’s *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and The Biblical History*, which reviews the role of the missional church throughout biblical history. Other authors were researched who had addressed the challenge to implement change. One of these was *Leading Congregational Change* by Jim Herrington, Mike Bonem, and James Furr, which is a practical approach to leading congregations through the transformation process. Another work was Reggie McNeal’s *Revolution in*

83. Furr, Bonem, and Herrington, *Leading Congregational Change*, 128.

84. Ibid., 144.

Leadership: Training Apostles for Tomorrow's Church, an examination of the leadership styles of the apostles in creating missional learning communities. Roxburgh's *Missional Map Making: Skills for Leading in Times of Transition*, provides an examination of the different skill sets needed for transitioning a congregation and a community. Some preliminary research was done on leadership styles, such as Kennon L. Callahan's *Effective Church Leadership*, focusing on the foundational principles for developing leadership on a mission field. Another was James Kouzes and Barry Posner's *Christian Reflections on Leadership Challenge*, which demonstrates how Christian leaders put into place the five practices of Exemplary Leadership.

Summary

The research addressed the historical, biblical, and theological backgrounds of the missional movement. It looked at its conception, beginning with the Willingen statement, its pioneering leaders such as Dr. Leslie Newbigin, and some of its current leading practioners, such as Roxburgh, Guder, and the Allelon Network. The project reviewed the biblical support for the missional movement in the Old and New Testaments, specifically Genesis and Luke. The research identified some of the challenges of transitioning to a missional model of ministry as well as how missional change might be implemented. The next chapter reviews the design and action of the project.

Chapter III

Project Design and Implementation

The project entailed working to transition two AME churches from an attractional church model to a missional model of ministry. Both churches had aging populations and were entrenched in their traditional styles of ministry. Both churches, however, were experiencing decline in membership and did not have an active fellowship within the communities where they were located.

Church A was located in rural San Jacinto County off of the main roadway. The church was approximately 150 years old. The congregation had fewer than twenty-five members, and regular church attendance was approximately twelve or fewer members.

Church B was located in downtown Houston and was approximately 137 years old. The church had 120 members and an average weekly attendance of fifty to sixty congregants. The church was located in an area that was going through gentrification. The ethnic make-up of the community had gone from predominately African-American home renters to predominately young, White, urban professionals living in apartments and condominiums. There was also a significant Hispanic population.

This project had three phases:

1. Phase 1 was an orientation/training session. The session introduced the participants to the missional model.
2. Phase 2 consisted of adaptive exercises intended to illustrate practical applications of being missional. In these exercises, the participants were asked to go out and interact within the community where the churches were located.

3. Phase 3 was a debriefing session where the participants discussed whether this project had met its goal of preparing a church to go from a traditional church model to a missional church model.

The Set-up

The project leader met with the lead pastor in his district, his presiding elder, and the leader of the local homeless ministry. The purpose was to share the intentions of his project and what assistance and/or involvement he would need from each of them. The project leader got approval from his presiding elder to commence his project. The leader also met with each of the congregations involved to explain how the project might affect them and to solicit volunteers for the project. The goal was to get at least five to ten volunteers from each congregation. Seven volunteers responded from the rural congregation and fourteen from the urban.

The project leader met with each congregation to discuss dates for the training sessions and to orient them to the project. For the orientation session with the rural congregation, all volunteers showed up, and the project leader explained the process and expectations. Two volunteers expressed that they did not want to participate in any exercises away from the church building in the community. The project leader had a similar experience with the urban church, with some members expressing a reluctance to do anything outside of the church. This uneasiness from both groups opened up an impromptu discussion about the missional approach to ministry. The leader asked the group, “What was the purpose of Jesus sending the disciples out in the Luke 10 passage without any resources or supplies?” The leader shared, “Maybe it was to force the disciples to interact with the community in which they were ministering.” While the discussion was spirited, it did not result in anyone changing their minds.

The project utilized the missional change model designed by Roxburgh and Romanuk and discussed in their book, *The Missional Leader*. The project utilized adaptive exercises instead of tactical exercises. The authors denote the difference, stating that an adaptive exercise “requires the participants to identify new approaches to the challenges facing them, while the tactical exercises are designed to improve what you are currently doing.”¹ The challenge of transitioning from a traditional, attractive church model to a missional model was a brand new challenge for the two participating churches. The challenge of shifting paradigms and worldviews addressed the mindsets of the congregants.

The change model involved navigating five steps: Awareness, Understanding, Evaluating, Experimenting, and Commitment. The model was also modified to allow for a stage of admission and different steps of commitment. The admission phase required the participants to make a personal admission that they may have digressed from the biblical command of ushering in the kingdom of God. This step was important because if the participants could admit that they were not addressing Jesus’s expectations, then they would be more apt to seek a way to adhere to them. Additionally, the two levels of commitment required a response from participants that they were open to change. Getting the participants to recognize their bias and to be open to the possibility that there may be a better way to usher in the kingdom allowed for an easier transfer of information. The second commitment level was an open-minded enthusiasm to begin missional involvement in this community. Last, there was a step in the commitment session to allow for goal setting by participants.

1. Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*, 99.

Phase 1: Preparing the Local Church for Missional Transitioning

Phase 1 included three steps: 1) a pre-orientation survey, 2) an interactive Bible study with a presentation on the missional movement, and 3) a quiz for understanding. Phase 1 entailed introducing the church to what it meant to be missional. Prior to talking about being missional, a group Bible study was conducted dealing with Gen. 12:3 (the call of Abram) and Luke 10 (the sending of the seventy), as well as the Good Samaritan. The main goal of the Bible study was to introduce to the participants that missional ministry is community ministry. Mentioned earlier, the question from the Luke 10 passage, “Why did Jesus send the seventy out without any supplies,” opened up a discussion among both groups about interacting within the community. While separate sessions were held, both groups agreed that community interaction was an underlying desire of Jesus. While they agreed that Jesus had a desire for the disciples to interact within the community, the urban church felt that, because the majority of congregants lived outside of the church community, that community involvement would be a challenge. The group took note and listed that observation as one of the major challenges to overcome—connecting back to the community. Following is an outline of the process steps involved.

I. Awareness (Pre-Assessment)

Conduct survey of congregants to determine their base line of understanding of what it means to be missional.

II. Understanding

Based on survey results, conduct informational training sessions, providing an overview of the historical, biblical, and theological background of the missional movement (Appendix A).

1. What is “missional”?
2. Why should the church be missional?
3. Where should the church be missional?

III. Evaluation (Post-Assessment)

Poll the congregants to determine their readiness to move to the experimental stage, clarifying their commitment to the community exercises.

IV. Trials, Experiment Stage

Develop adaptive exercises (Appendices F, G) to help enhance participants’ awareness of:

1. Context in which their church is located, needs of community.
2. How to communicate effectively in their contextual community.
3. How to identify and enlist community partners.

V. Goal Setting

Develop missional goals based on community needs.

1. Spiritual (participants’ attitude).
 - a. Do participants feel they can make a difference? Yes or No
 - b. Does the community feel the participants/congregants care about community? Yes or No
2. Physical (what success will look like)
 - a. Percent of congregational participation.
 - b. Do congregants spend thirty to fifty percent of their time in community activities?
 - c. Percent of increase of church name recognition.

VI. Commitment

The leader and participants developed milestones that demonstrated a commitment to the transition process. The leader reviewed and utilized the Disciplines of Transformational Leadership as a tool for the commitment phase.

Awareness

The awareness process consisted of, first, having the participants take an initial survey to establish a baseline of their missional knowledge or the lack thereof. Following the survey, the leader conducted an awareness/orientation workshop defining “missional” and explaining why the church should be moving in that direction. The leader discussed some of the challenges to transitioning to a missional model, such as the difficulty of confronting the traditional mental models of the church. He explained that the church has a mental model of Jesus meeting the needs of people; therefore, the church thinks that their needs are the ones to be met, not recognizing that, while that is true, the church must also be meeting the needs of those outside of the church.

The missional model, however, says the church should be meeting the needs of the community as well as the needs of the church. This builds on thoughts that Roxburgh expressed, “Jesus calls us into a life of meeting the needs of others not ourselves.”² Jesus said, “I came to set the captives free”; he did not say, “I came to free myself.” Therefore, the focus of the missional church is to be a blessing to the community instead of trying to get the community to bless them.

The following is how the participants responded to the “Missional Understanding Survey”:

1. Select the answer that best describes your image of the church:

2. Roxburgh, *Missional Map-Making*, 147.

- a. The building
- b. The congregation
- c. The community
- d. A place where God rules

(The majority of the participants selected “b” but “d” was close.)

2. A missional church is a church where:
- a. They support missions over seas
 - b. A church where the people give freely to support evangelism
 - c. A place where the congregants are active and present in the community
 - d. A church where they have a mission statement

(Most selected “a” which is not surprising since it is the traditional church model.)

3. What answer best describes the Kingdom of God based on Luke 6:27-38:
- a. The Kingdom of God is when everyone loves one another
 - b. The Kingdom of God is when Jesus returns
 - c. The Kingdom of God is everyone having enough
 - d. The Kingdom of God is hard to explain

(The top answer was “a” but the project leader felt the question was too broad.)

4. What answer best describes the church’s community?
- a. The area in which the church is located
 - b. The area where the congregants live
 - c. Everywhere the church gets involved
 - d. All the above.

(The top answer was “a,” and again the project leader was thinking that after the discussion about the passage that folks would choose “c.”)

5. John 20:21 says, “As the father has sent me, so I send you.” What does that mean to you?
 - a. The church has a mission to go out and evangelize
 - b. God wants the church to bring people into the church
 - c. a & b
 - d. It means the church is not fulfilling its missional obligation

(The top answer was “a.”)

Understanding

Following the pre-session questions, the leader went through an overview on the history and reasons for being missional. Topics included defining “missional,” why the church should be missional, and where the church should be missional. The session included the history of the missional movement. During the session, both groups found problems with understanding the pre- and post-Christendom periods and how they were factors in the church not being missionally focused. One of the issues specifically in the urban church was the connection to the African-American experience (see Conclusions, Appendix A).

Evaluation (Post-Session)

In order to gauge if there was an increased level of awareness and understanding of the missional process, a post-session survey of the participants was administered. The post-session survey consisted of questions that addressed what additional tools or

assistance the church may need to complete a transition process. Following are some examples of the survey questions:

“Based on what is now known, does transitioning to a missional model seem correct?” In both the urban and rural settings, the participants were not satisfied that a missional model was different than what they were currently doing. Neither group could see how a missional approach would increase church membership, even though increasing church membership was not an objective.

“What other churches in the community seem to be practicing a missional model?” The rural church did not identify any churches that they thought might be practicing a missional perspective. The urban church identified two churches that they thought were missionally focused. One is a predominately Black church in downtown Houston that was active with the homeless and with feeding ministries and another church was predominately oriented toward “Generation X” clientele that operated in a warehouse. It appeared to have a base that was, as the participants described, “Yuppie like.”

- What outside assistance do we need? (The rural church felt they were ready for the exercises and the urban church wanted to visit and observe both the churches identified to get a better understanding of what being missional might involve.)
- Is the missional model in conflict with any of our current practices or traditions?

Trial Exercise

The second part of the orientation was to have the participants take part in an exercise that might create awareness around better understanding the contexts in which the churches were located, as well as identifying community needs, concerns, and also

familiarizing the community with the respective churches. The exercises were also intended to help the participants develop and/or enhance their communication skills around becoming better listeners.

The exercise utilized was adapted from an exercise by Gary Nelson, a Canadian church leader, who was also introducing his church to transitioning to a missional model of ministry. He suggested that to get the church aware of the community in which they operated, they should:

1. Attend special community activities, youth events, ball games, political events, and so on.
2. Investigate both the official and common names of the neighborhood.
3. Walk, drive, and ride their neighborhood during different periods of the day.
4. Observe where the social gatherings are: bars, clubs, parks, malls, and so on.³

Adaptive Missional Exercise: Churches A and B

Adaptive Exercise 1: Church A

Description of the Church: Church A was a small, rural congregation located on a road that has no other commercial activity and sparse residential properties with approximately twenty adults and twenty youth, representing three families. The church once had a membership of almost one hundred but had decreased to less than twenty-five, with no “pronounced” presence in the community. Likewise, the community demonstrated no awareness of the church. Likely, the community would not think of it when talking about churches in the area. For the church to survive, it needed to create an

3. Summarized from Gary Nelson, *Borderland Churches: A Congregations Introduction To Missional Living* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2008), 150-3.

environment that would keep the interest of the young adults within the church. For the church to thrive, it needed to increase its presence in the community. The church was not sure how to grow its membership or how to increase the communities' awareness of its presence.

Proposed Experiment: An adaptive exercise to address this challenge was to increase the members' knowledge of their church and to understand what some of the community's needs were and also, to enhance the congregants' communication skills within their contextual community.

Experiment: Since this church was founded immediately after the end of the Civil War, in 1866, the congregants and the project leader thought it would be a good idea to have participants go throughout the community with a petition to make the church an historical landmark as an icebreaker. The congregants were also told to ask the people they were soliciting, "What do you think are the needs in this community and how can other churches in the area help meet those needs?" The thought was that by telling the community who they were and asking them what they needed, they would be informing the community of their presence and listening to the community concerns. The thought was that this process might generate a line of communication between the community and the church. The participants were given three weeks to conduct this exercise, after which time the group would meet and discuss the results.

Adaptive Exercise #2: Church A

A second exercise was also presented to the group, and the participants were given the option to conduct either exercise.

Exercise: The participants were told to go to the local strip center and hold a sign that reads, “Ask me about my church (church name).” The participants were not to initiate the conversation about the church but only to respond when asked to tell the person about their church. To get the attention of passersby, the congregants were given the option to utilize various ice breakers, such as passing out cold water. The team prepared a brief bio about the church to enhance clarity of information. The experiment was also intended to create, within the participants, a desire to share information about the church within the community as well as to enhance their ability to interact in the community. Again, the participants had three weeks to conduct this exercise.

Adaptive Exercise 1: Church B

Description of Church: Church B was a medium-sized urban congregation located on a major thoroughfare in downtown Houston. It occupied about an acre of land and was surrounded by an influx of condominiums and gentrified activity. The population around the church consisted of middle- to upper-income Caucasians and Hispanics. The congregation was comprised of approximately eighty adults and twenty youth. The church once had a membership of almost three hundred but was now down to approximately 125 with an average attendance of seventy-five. The congregants of the church were well aware of its relevance to the community and its historical significance. Similar to the rural church, however, the current community demonstrated no awareness of the church. In order for this church to survive, it needed to create an environment that would keep the interest of the young adults within the church. In order for it to thrive, it needed to increase its presence in the community. The church was a traditional church

model and did not operate outside of its walls. They were not sure how to grow their membership or how to increase the community's awareness of their presence.

Proposed Experiment: In order to address this challenge, the participants decided to hold an open house at the church thinking that it would enhance the congregants' interaction within the community.

Experiment: The church was founded in 1881 and, at one time, was a major entity within the community. An open house/block party was designed to draw the community in and allow the church to discuss the history of the church with the community. Also similar to the rural church, the congregants and the project leader thought it would be a good idea to have participants ask the community what were their concerns and needs. The participants were given one month to plan and conduct this exercise, after which the group would meet and discuss the results.

Adaptive Exercises 2 and 3: Church B

Two other exercise options were also presented to the group. Exercise one was a joint effort; these were individual efforts.

Exercise 2: The participants were told to go to the local area near the church where homeless people congregated. They were instructed to engage in conversation but not to pressure them by asking them how they ended up homeless. A local homeless ministry conducted daily services for the homeless, so the participants had the option of sitting in on one of the worship services to observe and participate. The purpose of this exercise was to acquaint them personally with what the homeless population experienced at their level.

Exercise 3: The participants were asked to visit one of the churches they identified as practicing a missional ministry and ask questions about the ministry. When the group got back together, they would report on their findings.

Identifying Community Partners

The adaptive exercises were intended to help the participating congregations complete a timeline of their history within their local communities. Additionally, they aided in identifying a network of community partners to assist the church in becoming involved in the life of the community. It was important for the congregants to understand who or what was in their community if they were going to be efficiently active in the community. Some of the things the congregants needed to learn were: What were the socio-economic classes of the community? What were the races and age groups living there? What other religious denominations or churches were located within a six-block area of their church? What did the major needs look like for the community? How close was the nearest hospital, grocery, pharmacy, police station, and school? This information would aid the congregants in identifying areas where they could make an immediate difference. It was also important for congregants to identify how decisions were made within the community of the church. In *Studying Congregations*, Ammerman and co-authors write, “Understanding how decisions are made, consensus built, or problems addressed within your community requires that you carefully examine the various organizations that meet to shape the civic life of the community.”⁴ Developing a partnership with the political leadership, hospitals, schools, etc., would help expedite the congregants’ desire to be a force in the community.

4. Ammerman, et.al., *Studying Congregations*, 67.

Therefore, it was important for the congregants to practice good communication and especially listening skills. As Stephen Covey words it, “Seek first to understand then to be understood.” The leader must be able to emphatically hear the congregants and the congregants need to hear from the community. In their book, *Crucial Conversations*, Kerry Patterson and co-authors states, “that when it comes to risky, controversial, and emotional conversations, skilled people find a way to get all relevant information from themselves and others out into the open.”⁵ The skill of listening to understand the needs of the community were crucial to the congregants’ ability to enlist community partners. To ensure that these skills were developed, the congregation needed to develop programs to enhance their skills in these areas.

Post Adaptive Exercise Meeting

The rural church initially agreed to meet three weeks after the initial meeting, but due to schedule conflicts, it was approximately five weeks. Only two people showed up for the meeting. None of the participants were able to complete or conduct any of the exercises. The leader was not the pastor of this church, so it was then a challenge to move forward. The leader held a conference with the pastor and received feedback that the members/participants did not want to move forward with the project. The leader asked if the pastor would poll the members and ask them if they would mind completing a survey regarding what they thought might be the cause of their unwillingness to move forward. The survey results are discussed in Chapter IV.

5. Kerry Patterson, et.al., *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High* (Nashville: McGraw Hill, 2012), 23.

The urban church met approximately three weeks after the initial meeting with varying results from the exercises. The pastor/leader asked them weekly how they were doing with the exercises. The “open house” exercise was conducted, but community involvement was non-existent. One family from the community came to the open house. The church had a water slide for kids and an Hispanic mother brought two small children over to do the water slide. Unfortunately, the mother did not speak English well enough to want to hear anything about the church; in fact, the lady said she was Catholic.

The urban church participated in the worship services of the homeless ministry. Following the service, the church provided lunch for the homeless congregation. The participants visited the worship service on two occasions. During the first occasion, there was little interaction other than the serving of the food. The leader of the homeless ministry, however, may have discouraged the participants because he cautioned them strongly not to give the homeless any money. The group discussed this prior to the second visit and reconciled that the warning did not mean for them not to interact with the homeless. During the second visit, the participants spoke with the homeless and invited them to worship with the church. Afterwards, the leader of the homeless outreach explained that their attending the worship services at the church was not something they supported because it would detract from their services, even though the services were held at different times. The feedback regarding this exercise focused more on the group explaining how this did not seem to be a way to grow the church rather than it being a way to understand the plight of the needy.

None of the participants visited any of the churches they identified as practicing a missional ministry. The reasons varied, but it was basically due to them saying there was

not enough time. An alternative activity was recommended to the group, offering to take them on a tour of the community within a twelve-block area in all directions of the church. The purpose was to identify how the neighborhood had changed and how those changes impacted the church. Four persons took advantage of this activity and, upon review of their learning, created a good discussion, because most of the group had not taken a serious look at the community in years. The members acknowledged that they usually come to the church in the same direction all the time and never take the time to look at the community. This quick exercise had the intended result of the group seeing what changes had occurred in the community surrounding the church. The group realized that, if they were going to be effective and have an impact on this community, they would need to be multi-cultural in their ministry and maybe multilingual. This realization also led to the question, “Is this something we want to do?” The following chapter will highlight the evaluation of project outcomes and the project overall.

Chapter IV

Evaluation

The focus of this chapter will be to answer the following question: Did the project achieve the desired outcomes listed below as described in Chapter I of this report?

- *Participation*: Representative participation of congregants in the project.
- *Congregational Impact*: Church recognizes the need for a change in the way the church does ministry.
- *Community Impact*: Church develops a desire to interact/engage with the community.
- *Kingdom focus*: Congregants recognize the difference and need to work toward kingdom versus church growth.
- *Transitional Training*: Is this project a template for other churches to follow in transitioning to missional ministry?

Project Participation: The project leader wanted a representative number of congregants to participate in the project. The goal was to have a minimum of twenty percent of the congregants participate. Participation was functionally defined by this project as, how many participants started the project and how many completed the project? The twenty percent goal was based on the Pareto model, that twenty percent of any organization is responsible for eighty percent of the work. Therefore, twenty percent of the core leadership should be influencers. The rural church congregation/participants were referenced as Church B, and the urban church participants were referenced as Church A.

In church B, most of the congregants (ninety percent of the congregation), initially said they would participate in the project; however, the number of participants who attended the orientation session were much fewer.

Following are the percentages of church adults participating in the project:¹

- Church B: Seven of twenty-five = twenty-eight percent (eleven persons initially said they would participate.

The percentages of persons completing the project:

- Church B: Zero of seven = zero percent.

There was not an exit interview with persons who did not complete the project because the project leader, who at one time was the pastor of the church, was not able to meet with the participants to find out their reasoning for not completing the project.

Church A had similar participation results. Of the active, regular-attending members, approximately thirty initially said they would participate in the project.

The percentage of actual participants:

- Church A: Eleven of sixty = eighteen percent.

Percentage completing:

- Church A: Six of eleven = fifty-four percent.

While both churches had less than the twenty percent participation, the major disappointment was the lack of congregants completing the project. In evaluating the participation, the primary reason for some of the failure of the adaptive exercises was due to the age and sex of the participants. The exercises were geared toward a more youthful

1. Note: There was not an exit interview with persons who did not complete the project, because the project leader, who at one time was pastor, did not get support from the current pastor on finding the reasons for group not completing the project.

group of participants. The other area of note was that, while in both churches the majority of participants were core leaders, the participants completing the project were less experienced and did not have the congregational influence desired.

Congregational Impact: Does the church recognize the need to change the way it does ministry? As stated previously, both the rural and urban churches were suffering from declining membership. Additionally, the urban church had a shifting demographic that complicated its ministry focus, saying in effect, “If you are going to minister in this community then your ministry needs to adapt to your environment.” They both were, as MacIvaine calls it, in a state of “situational crisis.”² Their environments had changed, and they were also challenged with a decision to stay in the place in which God had placed them or to relocate. Neither had brought in new members in a few years, and those new members who did come in did not remain in the church long.

Therefore, the leader suggested to them that they visit other churches in the area that had made the transition to a missional format to see and understand how they were doing ministry. The rural church had a couple of churches in the area that had a missional type of ministry. Unfortunately, because the churches had memberships that were over 1,000 congregants, and they also had a predominately non-Afrocentric membership, the participants opted not to visit them. Therefore, the rural church did not visit any churches for benchmarking. Additionally, the original participants had begun to lose interest in the project. The urban churches also had a couple of churches to visit but also chose not to inquire. Their reasoning appeared to be that it was too much work, or the timing for a visit never worked out. So, while both churches recognized the need for change, they did

2. W. Rodman MacIvaine III, “How Churches Become Missional,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 167 (April-June 2010): 216-33.

not resolve the urgency to change. They realized that their ministries were stuck and that what once worked was no longer working, but how to sustain a missional or any attractive ministry was not resolved. At this time, the project did not provide sufficient incentive to stimulate the kind of congregational impact needed for this desired outcome to be achieved.

Community Impact: The following survey question was specifically tailored to address this desired outcome.

1. How excited are you to interact missionally in your community?
 - a. Very _____ Maybe _____ Not at all _____
 - b. Church A (urban) results: Of eleven participants, all selected very.
 - c. Church B (rural) results: Of seven participants, six selected very and one said maybe.

The answers they gave reflected a desire to do the exercise; however, a couple of observations during the project demonstrated that this would not be an easy process.

First, the rural church did not have any close neighbors, so interacting with the community would take some effort. The urban church, however, held a fellowship event that was open to the community. They thought this would be a good way to engage with them. The event resulted in two neighborhood families coming over because their children saw the waterslide. One of the things that the event unearthed was that there was a language barrier that would have to be negotiated because a percentage of the neighborhood was now Hispanic. Another large percentage of the neighborhood was Caucasian and, since the name of the church was “African Methodist,” then the name was perhaps a deterrent to the surrounding community. There was not a survey question to address the Afrocentric name of the church; however, in hindsight it would have been

beneficial to do so. Overall, the congregants seemed to have a desire to engage with the community, but the language and racial hurdles were significant. A plan to specifically address those challenges would have to be addressed in a forward plan if necessary.

Kingdom Focus: Did the project achieve the desired outcome of the church knowing the difference between church growth and kingdom growth? To achieve this outcome, the project leader introduced the concept with a discussion of the Luke 10 passage. The passage introduced the concept that the kingdom is not a small group sticking close to Jesus but followers and disciples throughout the region. The discussion of the text was to introduce and orient the participants to a couple of missional concepts, such as depending on God for all of one's needs, interacting with people different from oneself (cultural interaction), traveling to other communities; and getting to know others' concerns. After the study, the participants completed a couple of surveys to gauge their understanding of the concepts.

In the first survey, the participants were asked the following five questions:

- 1 What does the passage missionally say to you?
2. How can you meet the expectations of this passage in your community interactions?
3. Why was it important for the disciples to go out without any provisions?
4. What does verse nine say to you? "Heal the sick who are there and tell them, the kingdom of God has come near to you."

As they discussed the passage, the responses of both groups leaned toward church growth versus kingdom growth being the preferred result. While kingdom growth was the intended result, both congregations were convinced that if the church grows, they will

grow the kingdom. They did, however, reconcile that church growth did not necessarily mean that it had to be their church.

An additional follow-up question on the Luke 10 passage was asked to get their thoughts on community interaction. The question was, “What is your focus when going out in the community regarding the passage?” The answer the leader was looking for from the participants was “looking for the needs of others.” The leader thought the congregants would resolve that, if the church were not focused on the needs of community, they would be challenged when trying to minister to the unchurched community. This was especially the case for those churches that had been in a community for years and had never gotten involved with the surrounding people. So, when asked the question, “What is your missional purpose in the community,” almost everyone said to grow the church by winning souls, which was not wrong from an evangelistic standpoint but not the answer from a missional standpoint. The Luke 10 Bible study had varying degrees of results, and perhaps there was also the difficulty of transferring the theological concepts from local ministry to community ministry. What was brought out in the conclusions was that this was an important point to make before moving to the next level, “understanding,” but the project leader moved on from this in order to cover more subjects.

Transitional Training Template: The question as to whether this missional transition model was right for other AME churches was not answerable with the limited data that the project yielded. Since the rural church did not complete the project and only the urban church was measured, the outcome of whether this training was a model for other AME churches was inconclusive. The project leader thought that the project may

not have been tailored specifically enough for the churches involved. For example, the use of slides and questions in the survey may have been too academic. The slide presentation was a composite of presentations from other academic presentations and not tailored specifically for this group. A lot of time was spent explaining what the project leader thought were simplistic questions. With that said, however, the leader also thinks that the project participants may not have the skill set to address the challenges by using adaptive problem solving. The congregants were still working on the idea that if it worked in the past it should still work.

The community around them had changed, and the social, economic, and racial makeup of the area around the church had changed. This meant that the community base, from which, historically, the church had drawn its membership, had changed. Therefore, if it were going to continue to draw on this community, then it needed to change how it interacted—it was critical to move from the tactical model of problem solving to an adaptive model. It appeared that, from the lack of engagement with the adaptive exercises, the congregants were not ready to make that leap. Again, with that said, the fault might have been in the complexity or design of the exercises. The evaluation of the adaptive exercises was hampered by the groups not completing them as directed. The adaptive exercises were intended to stimulate discussion around the two outcomes (i.e., the congregants interacting with their communities and them understanding the need to change their ministry). As the leader evaluated the project, it did not appear that the exercises achieved their objectives. In recognizing that the missional change model builds on the step before it, then the leader concludes that the level of understanding may not have been sufficiently achieved because the awareness level was not achieved. As will be

stated in the conclusions, personal reading of materials on missional theology and practices could have led to a deeper sense of awareness and understanding of the missional process.

Evaluating whether these churches were the right candidates for this project was indeterminate. Both churches were thought to be good subjects because of what each of them were going through—they fit the profile of churches that needed to change. The declining membership, the shifting communities, and the desire of those churches to remain in those communities illustrated that, if they were going to survive, they needed to change their current style of ministry to one that was appealing to the communities surrounding their locations. With that said, these churches were right for the project. The rural church had a significant challenge because it did not have a peripheral community. This church would have to find ways to engage other churches or agencies to partner with them. As stated, a plan to move forward was not part of this project. The urban church needed to shift their thinking that their church was an end in and of itself. Partnering with other ministries would go a long way toward moving them in a missional direction.

The project's objective was to prepare a church to transition from a traditional church model to a missional model. At the termination of this project, the churches involved in the project had not made a substantial enough shift in their ministries to say that they had or if they were going to transition to missional ministry. The rural church appeared not to be ready for a change in ministry. The urban church, however, had enhanced its ministry with two ministries that were missionally focused. One was a ministry that catered to the homeless community. The church, which before the project, had a cursory, inconsistent fellowship with the homeless ministry, now had committed to

providing a worship service for the homeless and feeding them twice a month. This was a significant step in engaging with the surrounding community. The fellowship got them into the environment where the homeless lived. While no homeless people consistently attend the church's worship service, the church has invited them to attend. In the future, it will be interesting to see what happens when the homeless start sitting next to the congregants in service. The other ministry with which the urban church became involved was one that supported the children of incarcerated parents. While it was a new venture, it was one that was pursued because of their desire to be more community-focused. The success of this project may not be known until after the seeds of this project have matured.

Chapter V

Conclusion

The project report will conclude by discussion of insights and learning from three distinct areas: 1) Participant participation; 2) Method of training; and 3) Project goals. The first to be addressed is participant participation.

Participant Participation

It appears that the participants' desire to be involved in the project may have been more about supporting the pastor rather than trying to understand what transitioning to a missional church was all about. The rural church committed to the project more out of a desire of obedience to the pastor than to the project. The urban church participants were split between curiosity, obedience to the pastor, and thinking it was all about evangelism. There was not an appropriate vetting process for project candidates. While unsure on what the vetting process should look like for prospective candidates, what was learned was the "all in" process used was not adequate.

The age and, to a degree, the sex of the participants also proved to be an impediment to commitment. In both the rural and urban churches, the participants were seniors, fifty-five and older. The rural church had two young people under thirty-five who did not show up for the project after signing up. In the urban church, there was only one participant under fifty. In both scenarios, the exercises that were designed for the project required individuals to spend some time on their feet canvassing the community. In

both churches, the canvassing did not happen to the degree needed for the project.

Specifically, it impacted the ability of the project to engage the neighborhood. What was needed was to adjust the project for the candidates' age and sex or ensure to solicit folks who better met the needs desired.

There should have been more thought given to an exit interview for participants who started the project and did not complete it. It would have been noteworthy to know what their reasons were. In the future, it would need to be considered that not everyone would complete the project and it would be good to know the reasons for not fulfilling their initial intentions. Regarding the rural church, the exit interviews were impacted by the leader no longer being the pastor of the church. A process needed to be in place, such as a contract from the pastor, ensuring that there would be access to the members. This would require a better utilization of resources, as the presiding elders of the congregation, to enforce the guidelines.

The timing allowed for the project was not sufficient to achieve the desired results; in particular, the adaptive exercises needed more time to complete. None of the participants completed the requested number of surveys and some did not complete the two training sessions. A start-and-stop date should have been established for the assigned tasks. Leaving it up to the participants to complete was too open-ended.

Method of Training

First, the project could not have been completed realistically in six months; it easily could have been a five- to six-year project. The couple of weeks allocated to training were compacted with all of the other involvements the participants had going on

in their lives. Ideally, the orientation/training phase of this project should have been six months to a year.

Second, the training should have started with a reading list to get the participants introduced to the missional process instead of giving them an overload of information. Starting off with a workshop did not appear to be received well. In both sessions, the rural and the urban, a considerable amount of time was spent just defining “missional.” The adaptive exercises did not work well with either congregation. While the participants exhibited enthusiasm to participate during the discussion and orientation session, there was reluctance to actually go out and interact with the community. It was not identified what could have been done differently to encourage more participation. What was evident, however, was that missional ministry was more than a desire but a commitment to change. Now, for both churches, it is still too early to determine the long-term impact.

The adaptive exercises did not get the desired results, as stated, due to the relatively short amount of time available and the age and sex of the participants. All but two of the participants in both settings were female and, as stated, also seniors in their mid- to late-sixties. The exercises were designed by default with a more energetic group of participants in mind. While the seniors were emotionally wanting to be a part of the project, physically they were not able to complete the task assigned. Regarding safety concerns, in hindsight, asking women to conduct the survey should have been considered with security in mind.

Project Goals

The goal of the project was to design a process to “prepare a church to transition from a traditional church model to a missional church model.” Post-project observation was that the goal more aptly stated would be to “acquaint a traditional church with a missional church theology.” As stated, the length of the project (six months), did not allow for preparing a church to transition. Just acquainting the church with the missional process took more than a couple of sessions. It was a significant hurdle to work through preconceived ideas of what “missional” versus “mission” and “evangelism” versus “missional” were. Roxburgh cautioned about timing when he wrote, “Just the evaluation stage could last three to six months.”¹ Connecting the awareness and the understanding processes to the evaluation was time-consuming; however, if it was not met, then the participants were merely going through the motions. Overall, the project helped to determine what did not work and, therefore, established a more refined direction for future projects.

Regarding this project being used as a missional transition template for other churches to follow, the answer was yes with a few important upgrades. First, the introductory period of the project should have included reading books on the subject, such as a history of the missional movement and current practitioners. Just giving an orientation session as was done in this project was not sufficient for a congregation looking to make that transition.

Also, congregations that were inclined to want to interact with the community should have been targeted and utilized. This would require doing a better job of walking

¹ Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*, 95.

through the steps of the Missional Change Model, especially the levels of awareness and understanding. If the congregation does not successfully master the level of understanding, then they cannot move on to the next level. The operational timeline did not consider that, for this to work, certain steps needed to be taken and not skipped. If the congregants did not already have a desire to interact, then they probably could not be given one. This could have been determined with a simple question such as, “Do you want to talk with your neighbors?” If the congregation is afraid of their neighbors, than interacting with them is out of the question. If done again, this project would have the total buy-in of the congregation and the pastor.

One additional upgrade for the training sessions would be to utilize additional presenters who were subject-matter experts or practitioners in the field—perhaps persons or pastors of churches who were practicing a missional ministry within their respective churches. Despite the preparation of research on missional ministry, the participants would have benefited by hearing from those who were already practicing a missional theology. In sum, if this project were conducted again, the following changes would be made:

- Have participants read literature about the project. Considerable time was spent getting the participants acquainted with terminology and theology.
- Conduct an onsite visit of churches practicing the missional process. The visiting of churches involved in missional ministry should not be an option. It was crucial to the program and it was an error not to require it as a step in the process.
- Have specific start-and-stop times for completing tasks, surveys, and exercises.
- Utilize additional facilitators with experience in the field or who are currently practicing the process. This was probably the most crucial error. Getting help in the facilitation and orientation of the missional ministry was a necessary step.

To conclude this report, a quote from Roxburgh and Boren will be used as both a summary of findings and an encouragement for future work with local churches who might consider a transition to missional ministry:

Those on the missional journey are wanderers, and we need to develop skills of reading the winds of the Spirit, testing the waters of culture, running with the currents of God's call so that we are not lost on the journey. To some it might look like we are lost when we cannot point to a model that can be easily applied anywhere. Instead, we are participants on a journey in which we have to learn from one another as we move toward becoming God's missional people.²

2. Roxburgh and Boren, *Introducing the Missional Church*, 25.

Appendix A

Missional Training Powerpoint

Missional Training Powerpoint

MISSIONAL LEADERSHIP PRESENTATION



1.) The end of Christendom



Post Christendom by Stuart Murray

Christendom was the period that started with Constantine where the Christian church became the center of culture & society.

~ 325AD

Post Christendom by Stuart Murray

From the church being at the center of society & culture to the church being pushed to the margins.

From Christians being the majority to a minority.

From Institution back toward movement.

Post Christendom by Stuart Murray

How do non-Christians view Christians?



Post Christendom by Stuart Murray

Judgmental

Hypocritical

Un-Thinking

Rigid

Narrow-minded

Non-Loving

Mean Spirited

Christians wonder why non-Christians don't embrace their beliefs and join their churches.

At the same time non-Christians wonder why Christians don't practice the teachings of Jesus and why they aren't making the world a better place.

Post Christendom by Stuart Murray

CURRENT CHALLENGES


People are increasingly identifying themselves as spiritual but not religious.

Religious Pluralism – Technology & Immigration

WHAT DO WE NEED TO DO?

It's about more than style & methods.

1.) Missional



WHAT IS MISSIONAL?

Missional is the practice of establishing the Kingdom of God in our communities.

- It is establishing the kingdom through developing relations with the community.
- It is the practice of relational Christianity.
- It is the practice of living the word and not preaching the word
- It is not about growing the church but growing the Kingdom

Post Christianity by Stuart Haining

IT'S A WAY OF LIFE

WE must begin to present Christianity as a way of life than a system of belief.

A set of spiritual practices rather than programs.

Devotional Practices

- Prayer
- Silence & Solitude
- Meditation
- Study

Ethical Practices

- Forgiveness
- Generosity
- Truthfulness
- Humility

Missional Practices

- Peacemaking/Reconciliation
- Radical Hospitality
- Establishing Justice
- Serving the Poor

Post Christianity by Stuart Haining

WHAT DID JESUS TEACH ?

In the gospel of Luke, chapters 9 & 10, Jesus sends out his disciples. First, he sends out the 12 then he sends out 72. However, he gives them an interesting set of instructions. "Don't take anything with you and Stay in the house you first enter. These instructions set the demeanor of his evangelistic missional ministry. AND FOR OURS:

- (1) Take nothing with you, no purse, no coat, no money
- (2) Stay where you first enter, don't go from house to house
- (3) Be a blessing

Adaptive Exercise 1

- BASED ON THE NARRATIVE DESCRIBED IN LUKE 9& 10, WHAT MISSIONAL BEHAVIORS WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO UNDERTAKE.
- AT YOUR TABLES SPEND 10 MINUTES DISCUSSING WHETHER YOUR TABLE-GROUP WOULD:
- TRAVEL TO A DIFFERENT CITY WITH OUT ANY MONEY OR COMMUNICATION DEVICE TO EVANGELIZE?
- IDENTIFY WHAT THE MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS YOU WOULD NEED?
- COME TO A CONSENSUS IF WHAT JESUS ASKED THE DISCIPLES TO DO IS UNREALISTIC TODAY

Adaptive Exercise 2

WORKING AT YOUR TABLES, SPEND 10 MINUTES TO COME TO A CONSENSUS AS TO WHETHER YOUR GROUP IS READY FOR A MISSIONAL ENDEAVOR. IF NOT IDENTIFY WHAT YOU NEED? IE:

- MORE CLARITY ON WHAT MISSIONAL BEHAVIOR ENTAILS
- MORE RESOURCES TO ACCOMPLISH THE TEXT
- DO NOT THINK IT IS FOR YOU

IF YOUR GROUP IS READY THEN IDENTIFY WHEN YOU WILL BEGIN TO PRACTICE MISSIONAL BEHAVIOR.

Background and Reference Readings to the Missional Church Movement

The Contemporary Missional Story

Kennan Callahan - Effective Church Leadership - 1990

- The day of the professional minister is over. The day of the missionary pastor has come.
- The day of the church culture is over. The day of the mission field has come.
- The day of the local church is over. The day of the mission outpost has come.

Appendix B

Luke 10 Exercise: Getting out into the Community

Luke 10 Exercise: Getting out into the Community

After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. He told them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road.

When you enter a house, first say, “Peace to this house.” If someone who promotes peace is there, your peace will rest on them; if not, it will return to you. Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.

When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is offered to you. Heal the sick who are there and tell them, “The kingdom of God has come near to you.” But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, “Even the dust of your town we wipe from our feet as a warning to you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God has come near.” (Luke 10:1-11)

Missional discussion and survey of the passage:

1. What does the passage missionally say to you?
2. How can you meet the expectations of this passage in your community interactions?
3. Why is it important for the disciples to go out without any provisions?
4. What does verse nine say to you?
5. How excited are you to interact missionally in your community?
 - a. Very _____ Maybe _____ Not at All _____

Appendix C

Luke 10 Exercise: Missionally Interacting in Our Community

**Luke 10 Exercise:
Missionally Interacting in Our Community**

1. What was Jesus's purpose in sending out the seventy-two?

(Note: When we enter the life of the local people, we should enter to listen to their stories and concerns.)

2. What are our intentions when we go out to minister, evangelize in our community?

3. When Jesus told the disciples to stay in the house they entered, and do not go from house to house, what was he trying to accomplish?

4. Do you think you practice developing long-term relationships when you are out evangelizing?

5. Why did Jesus tell the disciples to eat what was given to them ?

6. Give an example of how you can practice community meal sharing.

Appendix D

Missional Urban Community Survey

Missional Urban Community Survey

The purpose of this survey is for participants to get to know the people who live in the community, what their interests are, where they worship, and so on. Participants are not asked to evangelize but to spur community interaction and awareness. Each participant is asked to complete a minimum of three surveys.

Questionnaire

1. How long have you lived in this community?

2. Does your family also live in this area?

3. What do you think is good about this community?

4. What would you like to see improved in this community?

5. Who do you think does not have a voice in this community?

6. What do you think is historically significant about this community?

7. What is the major discussion in this community?

8. What community event(s) do you never miss, if any?

Appendix E

Missionally Looking at Our Neighborhood

Missionally Looking at Our Neighborhood

The purpose of this exercise is for participants to get acquainted with their neighbors and to develop relationships. Participants are asked to find at least two neighbors and to find out things that can only be known from having personal discussions (e.g., what is your middle name, what high school or college did you attend?).

Steps:

1. Walk or drive around your neighborhood and see it from the perspective of the seventy-two in Luke 10 (looking for a home to stay in).
 - a. How many nationalities, ethnic, or racial groups have you observed?
 - b. What are some names of persons who live three blocks from the church or your home?
 - c. How many neighbors were willing to talk with you?
2. What are your thoughts about this exercise?
3. Describe a way in which the church or your family can be a good neighbor.

Appendix F

Adaptive Rural Exercise #1

Adaptive Rural Exercise #1

Adaptive Challenge: My congregation is a small rural congregation located on a road that has no other commercial activity and sparse residential properties. The congregation is comprised of approximately forty-five adults and twenty youth, representing three families. The church has never had a “pronounced” presence in the community; the community is not aware we are here. The community may not think of us when they talk about churches in the area. In order for the church to survive, it needs to create an environment that will keep the interest of the young adults within the church. In order for it to thrive, it needs to increase its presence in the community. We are not sure how to increase the communities’ awareness of the church.

Proposed Experiment: A new behavior to address this challenge is to increase the members’ knowledge of their church through a behavior of spontaneous sharing.

Experiment: Have participants wear T-shirts that read, “Ask me about (Church Name)?” The congregants are not to initiate the conversation about the church; they are only to respond when asked to tell about the church. The congregants will wear the T-shirts while standing in the parking lot of the local shopping strip handing out cold water. The congregants will prepare a brief bio about the church to enhance clarity of information. The experiment will be conducted on two weekends.

Desired Outcome: The experiment will enhance the congregants’ desire to share information about the church within the community.

Appendix G

Adaptive Urban Exercise #2

Adaptive Urban Exercise #2

Adaptive Challenge: My congregation is a urban congregation of approximately seventy five members. It is located on a major thoroughfare in the heart of the city. The congregation is composed of approximately sixty adults and fifteen youth. The church was once a major presence in the community; however, today because of gentrification, the community is not aware we are here. In order for the church to survive, it needs to create an environment that draws on the multi-ethnic environment of the community. We are not sure how to increase the communities' awareness of the church. A new behavior to address this challenge is to increase the members' knowledge of their church and understand what some of the community's needs are.

Adaptive Experiment: Have participants go throughout the community with a petition to make the church an historical landmark (the church is 135 years old) The congregants will also asked the people they are soliciting, "What do they think are the needs in this community and how can the area churches help meet those needs?" The hypothesis is that by telling the community who we are and asking them what they need, we will be informing the community about us as well as listening to their concerns. This experiment will be conducted over a one-month period and then the congregation will meet to discuss results and develop an action plan if necessary.

Desired Outcome: This exercise will generate a line of communication between the community and the church.

Appendix H

Missional Faith Walk Practicum

Missional Faith Walk Practicum

Luke 10:4, “Do not take a purse, bag or sandals.”

Question: Participants, based on the Luke 10:4 passage, what is your willingness to participate in the following faith walk?

Directions: You will be taken to a different area of town and dropped off, within an area of five miles from the church. You may be placed in an area that is occupied by the homeless. You will not have any money or phone to call for help. Your task is to seek assistance from people you come in contact with and ask them to use their phone to call or get funds to get back to the church. You will have approximately two hours to complete your task. If not, we will return and pick you up and bring you back to the church.

Purpose: The purpose of this exercise is to illustrate the humility of seeking help.

Participants	Willing	Hesitant	Not Willing
Church A (7)	1	6	0
Church B (11)	2	9	0

Appendix I

Project Narrative Proposal

**Implementing Change toward a Missional Model within Two
African Methodist Episcopal Churches in Downtown
Houston and Rural San Jacinto County**

Project Narrative Proposal

The focus of this project is the implementation of a missional paradigm that will motivate the subject congregations toward a model based on active community involvement. The missional model is one that focuses the congregants to invite members into the church and to go out into the community and become engaged in the community's needs. Community focused means the church will implement ministries that demonstrate involvement in the community based on the area's needs.

The project will attempt to implement this strategy within two African Methodist Episcopal Church (hereafter AMEC) churches—one located in an urban setting and the other in a rural environment. It has been observed that both congregations have a lack of active community involvement and both are experiencing negative growth. The suspicion is that since both churches, although in different settings, display the same challenges, so perhaps both might benefit by utilizing the same missional paradigm.

Both of these churches are rooted in a traditional church model that focuses on activities centered within the church walls and not in the community. This model works to get people into the church and not get the church into the community. Both churches are experiencing two problems: 1) declining membership, and 2) aging, out-of-touch membership resulting in a lack of growth. The belief is that a missional model of

community involvement will enhance the “footprint” of both churches within their communities and may lead to a positive impact on membership. The missional model may also realign the AMEC to its core value of “kingdom building” and not church building. The success of this project may lead to its use as a template for other churches within the denomination experiencing the same symptoms.

The ministry settings of the churches are urban and rural. The congregants are ninety-nine percent African American. The urban church has an economic base of fifty percent retirees/baby boomers and thirty percent between the ages of thirty-five and fifty-five. Young people less than thirty years of age account for the rest of the congregants of the churches.

The premise of the project is to convince and develop a core group of congregants within an urban and a rural church who believe that a missional model is the direction the church should follow to lead toward renewed evangelistic, focused growth, and active community involvement. Both churches face a similar challenge.

- Church A’s membership is rooted in the traditional attractive church model. The congregation’s economic base is an aging group of baby boomers who are resistant to any change; therefore, transitioning to a missional model will be a significant paradigm shift.
- Church B’s membership is also a traditional church model; however, the core group consists of two families that make up sixty percent of the church membership. If the church does not have their buy-in, then implementing a new model will have increased complications.

This project is important due to three basic premises: 1) Currently, neither church is growing and there is little involvement in the surrounding community. A missional model may increase their involvement. 2) A missional model should help the church get

back to the business of kingdom building. 3) A successful program may be a template for other churches within the denomination.

Ministry Setting

Church A is located in Houston's mid-town, which is currently undergoing urban revitalization. Church B is located in a rural setting; the community is stable. The geographical/ethnic population of Church A is African-American. Income levels range from white-collar professionals, retirees, to blue-collar working class, and young, single mothers on family assistance. Church B is an African-American congregation, primarily millennials, with low to moderate income. The AMEC follows a tradition of assigning pastors annually to local congregations. The pastors are reassigned to a church as often as the Presiding Bishop believes the performance of the pastor warrants it. Because of this process, it may take a pastor a year to evaluate the performance and the reasons for the performance of his congregation. The belief is that a consistent missional versus traditional church model will function effectively even with the rotation of pastors. The participants selected for the study will be a core leadership team consisting of the church's stewards and trustees.

Project Outcomes and Measurable Assessments

The project's focus will be on three outcomes that will be derived by the utilization of adaptive experiments based on the particular challenges and proposed solutions. The first outcome is to implement core leader training that will familiarize the core leaders with the missional church model. The training will also include development of measurements to identify the numbers of leaders who accept the missional model as

the new direction of the church (the goal is one-third of leadership, twelve to fifteen, for Church A and five to seven for Church B).

The second outcome is to identify the impact on the congregation. The thinking is that one-third of the congregation becoming active in missional ministry will be a significant step toward improvement. Measurements will reveal how many congregants are involved (approximately one hundred congregants for Church A, and ten congregants for Church B).

The third outcome is to identify the amount of community impact the church exhibits following this project versus before the project. Specifically, how the church will approach gaining community influence and enlarging its “footprint” in the community. The measurement will be to identify the number of community partners each church has before and after the project. Church A has three potential community partners: 1) a housing complex across the street, 2) an elementary school located within walking distance of the church, and 3) a newly formed child development center, which is bringing youth and senior programs into the area. Church B is still identifying partners; however, one potential partner is the local community government. Measurements will reveal the impact of missional ministry on selected partners (i.e., the number of community residents that become involved with the church and the number of community events in which the church becomes involved).

Relevant History of Church

Church A is 137 years old and is considered to be one of the leading churches within the Texas denomination. One of the challenges for this church is that, while it admits to stagnation, it does not see that it needs to do any deep change. The motto of the

church is “Bringing the word to life and Believers Reaching Others by Witnessing and meeting Needs.” It does not live up to its model.

Church B is 150 years old, founded one year after the end of the Civil War. It is primarily made up of four families, which lends to its belief of self-sufficiency. For it to exist in this rural environment for 150 years is impressive. This church has a motto that says that every worship service will be a mountain-top experience.

Relevant Personal History of Project Leader

This Ordained Elder within the AMEC has been in ordained ministry for twenty years and pastoring for seven. Currently serving as Senior Pastor for Church A and the former Pastor for Church B, employment background includes being a leadership facilitator and strategic planner as well as thirty years of experience as a Senior Construction Safety Supervisor and manager of Sub-Sea projects.

Topics for Project Research

The project will include a review of historical, theoretical, and biblical resources and texts relating to the Missional Movement. The history of the AMEC’s purpose statement will be researched to note if contemporary churches have digressed from the original community mandate (e.g., “providing programs that will enhance the entire social development of all people”).¹ Research will include texts that address the cultural, theoretical, and practical systems of implementing change. For example, the expectation is that, by doing research on the works of Bowen’s Family Systems Theory (hereafter, BFST), an advantage will be gained into understanding how anxiety will affect the

1. Johnny Barbour, *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church* (Nashville: AMEC Publishing, 2013), 12.

implementation of the missional change model within the church. It is recognized that that there will be anxiety about the process. There will be a need to maintain a close relationship with the group to minimize or respond to this anxiety. Also researched will be leadership models to gain insight on what issues others have faced when trying to implement the missional model.

Missiologists such as Leslie Newbigin and Darrell Guder agree that the missional purpose of the church is to establish the reign of God on earth. Biblical texts will be researched that address at least three ways the church can establish God's reign. One, the church is seen as a sent people. Guder states that the church is sent to be a unique community establishing God's reign.² He references John 20:21 and Matt. 28:19-20 to illustrate that the church is a sent church not a gathering church. Genesis 12 describes how Abraham is sent to be a blessing to the nations where he dwells if those nations also welcome him. A second missional purpose of the church is that it is a benevolent community. 2 Corinthians 8 highlights the church as being a benevolent community. The benevolence of the church represents that it is not just being involved but also becoming a caring community. Van Gelder states that Israel was not about privileged status but service to the world³—a city on a hill . . . a light to the nations (Matt. 5:14-16). Van Gelder cites Mark 10:45, indicating that Jesus places a great emphasis on service. Last, regarding the benevolent ministry of the missional church, research will include the practice of leaving crops in the field for the less fortunate, described in the Old Testament

2. Darrell Guder, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 103.

3. Craig Van Gelder, *The Ministry of the Missional Church: A Community Led by the Spirit* (Grand Rapids Baker Books, 2007), 89.

passage of Lev. 23:22, which led to the meeting of the ancestors of David and Jesus. He thinks this communal missional practice has a unique eschatological consequence. These passages will be researched to see if current understandings match those of the referenced authors.

Project Overview

The project is designed to create a desire within the congregation to practice the missional model of the church by ministering outside of the church walls. Visits will be arranged to other churches within the community that model a missional approach, such as Ecclesia Church.

Preliminary Project Resources

Initial research has focused on authors that have addressed the task of implementing change within churches. Authors have been reviewed who address the theological, historical, and cultural aspects of the missional movement. First, David Bosch's book, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Missions*, looks at the historical, postmodern paradigm for understanding and addressing the missional church. Another work is Michael Goheen's *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and The Biblical History*, which is a review of the role of the missional church throughout biblical history. Also researched were authors who have addressed the challenge to implement change. One of these books is *Leading Congregational Change* by Jim Herrington, Mike Bonem, and James Furr, which is a practical approach to leading congregations through the transformation process. Another work is Reggie McNeal's *Revolution in Leadership: Training Apostles for Tomorrow's Church*, an

examination of the leadership styles of the apostles in creating missional learning communities. Alan Roxburgh's *Missional Map Making: Skills for Leading in Times of Transition*, provides an examination of the different skill sets needed for transitioning a congregation and a community. Some preliminary research has been done on leadership styles led by the works of Kenneth L. Callahan's *Effective Church Leadership*, focusing on the foundational principles for developing leadership on a mission field. Another is James Kouzes and Barry Posner's *Christian Reflections on Leadership Challenge*, which demonstrates how Christian leaders put into place the five practices of Exemplary Leadership. Last is a book by Henry Cloud, *Necessary Endings*, which provides insight into how ending some things is necessary and should be viewed in a positive light.

Procedural Outline and Timeline

The following tentative timeline has been developed for the project:

1. Conduct Research (Term 2016)
2. Meet with core group of leaders to present plan for implementing missional strategy (Fall 2016)
3. Conduct brainstorming and strategy sessions to determine the needs of the community (Fall 2016)
4. Meet with community partners: Thousand Hills Ministry, Houston food Bank, Area schools (Fall 2016)
5. Conduct series of training sessions with core leaders (Term 2017)
6. Have leaders' select community group to collaborate with on community needs (Term 2017)
7. Begin actively interacting with community through utilizations of interactive exercises (Term 2017)
8. Conduct periodic feedback sessions to identify concerns of teams (Term 2017)
9. Review process (midyear 2017)

10. Evaluate project and write research paper documenting the results of the project. (Term 2018)

Organizational Structure and Resources for Project Report

Chapter I, Introduction, will state the problem within the project's context, which is a lack of community involvement, specifically among the aging baby boomer generation. The proposed or envisioned solution to the problem is to introduce a missional model of ministry to the congregation. The measurable outcomes will be the number of congregants who actively engage the community in ministry. A measure will also include the number of community interactions that occur because of the adaptive interactive exercise the congregants are expected to conduct in the community.

Chapter II, the Research chapter, will include a variety of sections from the following: biblical, theological, historical, sociological, and ecclesiastical (denominational) foundations of the project, including segments mentioned in this proposal and as determined by the research (e.g., training groups for transition, missional training, and family systems thinking).

Chapter III, Action, will include evidence of what was done during the project itself, where the project was carried out, by whom, why, how, and when. The topics being researched are effective leadership, discernment practices for teams, and managing teams through anxious time, as well as the anxiety and degree of differentiation of leaders and team members.

Chapter IV, Evaluation, will report what evaluative tools were employed to measure qualitative and quantitative data collected. These will include pre- and post – project surveys. The statistical measurements will show increases or decreases in church

attendance by members and involvement by the community as well as participation of members in community outreach and community members interacting with the church.

Chapter V, Conclusion, will state learnings from the project, including what could be done differently in future attempts, next steps, and benefits to others.

Project Accountability

Permission for the implementation of the project will be received from the presiding elder of the North Houston District of the AMEC, senior pastors within the connection, and the HGST DMin coordinators.

Project File

The Project file will contain surveys and interviews, examples of adaptive challenge exercises with a summary of the findings, the curriculum of the missional training sessions, minutes of meetings with community groups, and copies of updates provided to the presiding elder, mentors, and feedback from the mentors.

The vision for this Project will be to accomplish the purposes set forth herein. There is an eager anticipation for measurements of objectives, final results, and what will be learned through this process.

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